Coaching Journal

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 There were a total of five coaching sessions that Mrs. Kimberly Sanders (KS) and I participated in regards to technology integration in the classroom. KS and I have been working together for two years, and a few years ago she was my student teacher, so there is a history of working together and collaborating on content and technology related concepts and information. We had a plan of attack for each coaching session and worked collaboratively, with me being more of a guiding force than that of a training one. As we are currently teammates, teach the same students, and work across the hall from other another, our strength is in communication and knowing how the other operates in certain academic situations. All of the coaching sessions were just another opportunity to strengthen our team to better address the needs of our students.

**Journal Entry One**

We first met to discuss what KS wanted from our technology coaching sessions. She immediately stated a need to understand the APP so she could help her math and science students like other teachers. We have an APP, which I built, that is used as a content management solution, among other features, for our students, teachers, parents, and other stakeholders. Obviously, this was not going to be a problem. KS also mentioned that she would like to become more familiar with the extra tools that SMART Technologies had to offer in their SMART Notebook software. I am also a certified SMART Educator and Trainer, so this too, was not going to be a problem. But mostly, she wanted to pick my brain throughout the year whenever a situation came up she needed help with. Again, not a problem.

The first coaching strategy was geared towards setting up a game plan for the upcoming coaching sessions. After identifying the APP and SMART Notebook as two major areas of interest, we discussed how although this acquisition of knowledge is beneficial, the real question is how would this newly acquired knowledge challenge her students to create, manipulate, or really, have anything to do with it at all? After this, we discussed that the first step is for her to become more comfortable with the APP and SMART Notebook software and afterwards, develop lessons that engage students.

The main reason I was able to identify her true needs to improve student learning and engagement, was by becoming the active listener. This is a strategy identified by Knight (2007) in which he explains that through listening, and understanding what the teacher is stating, developing a plan for coaching with the teacher’s needs can be met. I took this a step further with KS, and suggested that once we improve her skills and knowledge, we include the students in the process and engage them within the APP and SMART Notebook software.

KS immediately agreed and was on board with that suggestion, but reiterated that she wanted to become more knowledgeable with the technology first before she used it in her lessons. I agreed with her as well, and let her know that these coaching sessions are to ensure that she is more comfortable with technology implementation in her classroom and as soon as she is ready, which I believed would not take too long, we would implement her technology knowledge into her upcoming lessons for better student engagement.

After the first session, I felt very comfortable with where our coaching sessions were going to take us. Being an active listener is not just a coaching skill, but a life skill. I am pleased to report that the connection between literature and my coaching practices is evident and providing the opportunity to effectively assist KS in our future coaching sessions.

**Journal Entry Two**

In this session, we met in KS’s classroom for me to model, discuss, and work with both the school APP and SMART Notebook software. There were other teachers on the hallway that also wanted to jump in on the APP session so we invited them and had a small-group model/training session. Knight (2007) believes these sessions should be short, to the point and above all else, respectful in nature. If an instructional coach appears to exhibit a lack of respect for teachers, it will be very difficult for that instructional coach to regain a level of respect or trustworthiness that is needed to perform in this position. Even though I have done this sort of coaching session before, it is very important for my colleagues to feel comfortable with me and my coaching style. This is evident as they requested to jump in on the session, knowing how I operate and it would not be a waste of their time.

I started the lesson with placing each teacher in the front of the computers that were already in the classroom. The hands-on approach works well when learning how to manipulate the SMART Notebook software. We all worked on the creation of favorites used every day in a math environment and how to have quick and easy access to them. The second part of the working lesson focused on the school app, and how each teacher’s Google Drive is already synced up to the app for all to have access. The teachers were then able to drop and drag content, lessons, and even study guides for students and parents to access within the app.

This impromptu mini-lesson and coaching session only occurred because I have a positive working relationship with my colleagues. They were willing to give up, voluntarily, their planning time to join the coaching session I had planned for KS. After the other teachers left, KS and I concluded our coaching session with a discussion of her level of comfort with both the APP and SMART Notebook software and her ability to utilize what she learned during the session. Knight (2007) believes that “if we have carefully built an emotional connection with teachers, then we should find it easier to discuss topics that might come close to unearthing an identity conversation with teachers. Through our many different kinds of discussions and years of working together, we continue to develop our identity as a team. I will continue to monitor her progress, as per my current role in our team, with these two activities and offer my support as needed or requested.

**Journal Entry Three**

Before our actual coaching session, KS had a request and needed assistance with the acquisition of specific technology that she did not have access to and other technology she did not know was available to her. She was looking to project her graphing calculator onto her SMART Board while at the same time and screen, have a place for students to show their work on the same screen as the calculator. At first, I didn’t know how to respond as it was so specific. I needed to think about the best solution, if possible, for her. After a day of thinking and coming to a possible solution, I was reminded that this request was only made because of our previous coaching sessions. I am now convinced that I have KS “on board” and she is now in the “action phase” as compared by Knight (2007) when people decide to just quit smoking, or quick drinking, or just decide to get in shape, that they follow the slogan of Nike and “just do it!” KS is now asking me questions to further her implementation of technology in ways that make me think, which is exciting. Now, it was my turn to “just do it,” and find a solution for her request.

 I thought of a solution that had worked in the past, and we tried to duplicate that same past experience. We ended up checking out a SMART Notebook Document Camera from the media center and plugged it into the computer. I was able to load the document camera into the SMART Notebook software and “pinned” that page in the “dual page” option. What this meant was that I was able to load the document camera’s image into SMART Notebook software while at the same time, pin that page to the left of the screen so that her students could work the problems on the right side of the screen. Mrs. Sanders and her students were pleased, to say the least. As a coach, sometimes the greatest victories are just being able to answer a question with a response of “yes, that’s possible, and I’d love to show you how.”

**Journal Entry Four**

I have a website (http://www.exceedthestandard.com) I use for my students, created with Weebly, which Mrs. Sanders suggested that she may want to help out with when it comes to producing content for her two subjects, mathematics and science. Mrs. Sanders also suggested that she may even want to create her own website for her classroom. KS does not have any previous experience with website design and this came as a total shock to me as I would have never suspected this type of request or interest on her part. Again, at first, I was conflicted as to how to proceed. After speaking with KS for many days now, specifically about educational technology, I knew that she is a visual learner and watching YouTube video tutorials would be helpful for her to get an idea of what she was about to embark into with website design. Fortunately, Weebly has over seventy video tutorials for anyone (beginners to advanced users) to learn how to use the Weebly website creation website. As we discussed this on a Thursday, I suggested to KS to take the weekend and look over these tutorials so she would have some background knowledge with Weebly before we began our session.

That following Tuesday, we met and discussed what she was interested in doing. Knight (2007) states that “we shouldn’t teach someone to drive by giving them a lecture, tossing them a book, and then turning them loose on the freeway.” With this is mind, I wanted to make sure that this didn’t occur with Mrs. Sanders. KS stated that perhaps working together, with my website, would help her truly figure out if she really wanted to create a website or just work collaboratively with mine. She too agreed that more work needed to occur, on her end, for her to “drive alone” on the information super highway. As I suspected, she requested we carpool and use the HOV lane. Not a problem. Weebly allows multiple editors and giving her access to edit specific pages on my site was easily setup and allowed for us to get started at that time. We worked together on setting up the mathematics and science pages and after a few minutes, she was dragging and dropping like it was a piece of cake. She let me know, and she said this with all sincerity, that my assistance was no longer needed. KS explained that just sending her the link to YouTube got her started off with the knowledge she needed and that it was extremely helpful. Obviously, I stated again that “when” she needed more assistance with the website to just ask.

Sometimes just providing someone with a push in the right direction is all that is needed. This training session was not much more than an email sent and a quick checkup in regards to that email. With my knowledge of KS and her preferred method of learning, it was easy for me to provide what was needed.

**Journal Entry Five**

During this final coaching session we decided to do a buffet style of instructional technology for a 90 minute session. Mrs. Sanders agreed that by inviting other teachers in for the session, we would have an amazing time just sharing ideas, websites, apps, strategies, and innovative ways in which we can use educational technology in our school that may have not been thought of, or done, before. Teachers that came to learn, also shared, and left with ideas, strategies, and even confidence on how to implement educational technology in the classroom. Knight (2007) explains through the writings of Seth Godin, a former marketing director for Yahoo! Adds, “an idea that moves and grows and infects everyone it touches . . . that’s an idea virus” (p.19). The fact that we are all getting together to spread our knowledge and obtain others infectious ideas on educational technology parallels this thought and undoubtedly will help spread the ideas and innovation to others.

This was the first time this type of session, that I am aware of, was created and completed by teachers for teachers. No administrators were present and although it was just a few teachers that partook in this session, the success of it gave birth to more in the near future. The goal is to have one per month the rest of the year which will occur during the planning time of 8th grade teachers.

The reason that I believe this was successful was because teachers wanted to be there. They came for a specific reason, to learn about educational technology and to share what they already knew about educational technology.

References

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