Coaching Journal

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The instructional technology coaching experiences with Ms. Jones began through honest conversations concerning implementing technology into the first grade curriculum, managing resources, students, and system wide expectations while providing her students with differentiated instruction. Through our conversations and her willingness to complete the two technology surveys we were able to create a coaching partnership. This partnership was created to help both Ms. Jones and myself. The partnership approach to coaching that I decided to implement included both modeling, co-teaching, and the opportunity to collaborate with her. I currently have collaborative planning with her once a week, so this gives me a chance to plan and collaborate together.

**Session #1:**

**Instructional Coaching Strategies**

Before our coaching sessions began I shared my revised Instructional Technology Coaching Form with her. I explained to her that we would be using this document to keep notes on our sessions, identify our focus areas, and document before and after our sessions. During our collaborative planning Ms. Jones and I discussed several areas that we wanted to accomplish during our coaching sessions. For our first coaching session she specified that she would like to begin with a Marietta City School system-wide resource. During this one-on-one interview session I used several of the active listening strategies outlined by Knight in *Instructional Coaching: A Partnership Approach to Improving Instruction*. The listening strategy that I used during this initial meeting is called, Communicating our Understanding (p.65). Within this strategy I asked questions, clarified responses, and communicated my understanding of what Ms. Jones was relaying to me. Ms. Jones requested that I demonstrate for her how to use Renaissance Learning and establish how this resource can be used for the benefit of her students.

Renaissance Learning is a system-wide resource that was purchased by our school system several years ago. When this resource was purchased our teachers were initially provided with training. Unfortunately, new or transfer teachers are no longer provided with training so many are unsure of its benefits or how it can be used in their classrooms. Ms. Jones falls into this category since she has only been in our system a full two years. Many are aware that Renaissance Learning is mainly used for AR reading. During our first session I provided Ms. Jones with her log-in information and I proceeded to model how to set student locks and alerts, how to pull comprehension reports and identify student needs and reading levels. I shared with her how I have used these reports and information in the past and how it helped me organize my guided reading groups and share with parent’s comprehension concerns.

**Skill and Affective Changes**

This was our first coaching session together and Ms. Jones has always had a great appreciation for technology. Her main concerns have been mainly with time management and having the opportunity to investigate resources and apply them effectively in her classroom. With this first session she was pleased with the outcome and she definitely understood how this could positively impact her students learning. It could also provide her data points to be used in her data PLCs and for MTSS. Since this is our first session I have not noticed any changes, but she has remarked about changes that she will be making to her use of Renaissance Learning.

**Challenges and Solutions**

I personally felt good about this coaching session with Ms. Jones. In fact I hope that all of our sessions are similar to this one. I did not face any challenges modeling the use of Renaissance Learning with her. I have been using this resource for several years and I am also the Marietta Reads representative for my school, so I attend the training each year for this resource.

**Session #2:**

**Instructional Coaching Strategies**

Just like with our first coaching session Ms. Jones indicated that she wanted to learn about a Marietta City Schools system-wide resource called, Discovery Education. We began our coaching session discussing how to differentiate for her IB planners. Ms. Jones had received a very quick training on Discovery Education, but she did not feel that this resource would be appropriate for her first grade students. She felt that it was too advanced and too difficult for her first grade students to be able to handle. During this coaching session I focused on the big four: behavior, content knowledge, direct instruction, and formative assessment (p.138). Usually Ms. Jones has a positive outlook on resources that are provided for us. Within this strategy I wanted to convey to her how to manage this resource while enhancing her student’s content knowledge through differentiation and implementing a formative assessment. For this resource she was not receptive towards it and I believe that this stemmed from the quick training that she received.

I started this coaching session reassuring her of this resource and her ability to be able to manage it. I started off by sharing with her several of the discovery education boards that I had created for grades K-2, quiz builder, the ability to watch videos and read articles and textbooks, and the writing prompt section. We looked at her next topic for her IB planner, which is focused on inventors. We compiled videos, technology resources, and books for her students to view online to place on her board. Along with these resources we brainstormed two culminating tasks and rubrics for her students to choose from. Students had the ability to choose between either of the assignments. Once the board was completed we assigned it to all of her students. We planned to collaboratively show the students how to use the Discovery Education Boards and how to submit their assignments to Ms. Jones. We modeled for them how to access the videos, readings and also how to create an inventor time line.

**Skill and Affective Changes**

Initially she was reluctant, but as we worked through her feelings and just concentrated on the student objectives, I saw some good changes. Working alongside her to create the board and not just giving her a worksheet was really beneficial. We were able to talk through our project ideas and rubrics, view readings and videos to make sure that they were appropriate for her students and make sure that they were addressing the standards. She was still apprehensive during our co-teaching session, but in my opinion it went better than I expected. The students were engaged and excited about the board and they could not wait to get started. We initially planned for the boards to be used for her gifted students, but many of her students used it.

**Challenges and Solutions**

I felt that the coaching session went well with her. I do not believe that I have converted her to using Discovery Education Boards on a regular basis, but I do feel that she can easily use this resource more now. I feel that the most challenging part during this session was trying to make her understand that any resource can be used for our younger grades; it just requires that we modify them. I recommended that she not load her boards with too many tasks on them for her first grade students. We do not want to overload them, but we want to enhance their learning.

**Session #3:**

**Instructional Coaching Strategies**

For our next coaching session, we were talking after one of our faculty meetings about all of the resources that our system provides for us. I could hear it in her tone that it was getting to be overwhelming for her. For example, we have Aspen, Performance Plus, Planbook, Discovery Education, Renaissance Learning, and several others. These resources are used for grading, managing standardized test scores, communicating with parents, and some are just resources for our students. I began to tell her that this school year several of us are piloting a new learning management system called Itslearning. This system, as we become more proficient with it, will replace several of the resources that she mentioned and it will become a one stop shop for our teachers. During this session we both took part in a meaningful dialogue, which encouraged her to speak openly with me about her concerns and frustrations (p.25). This also helped me understand her concerns so I could successfully help her.

After our discussion I met with one of the members of our Digital Learning Department to discuss using Ms. Jones’ class as a pilot class in first grade. I explained to Ms. Jones that I am currently piloting this resource in my gifted and advanced content classes. I shared with her how I have setup my pages for my students and how my parents are instantly alerted when I have updated them. This saves me a large amount of time because I do not have to create a weekly newsletter. On my pages I have included information about our weekly standards, assignments, rubrics, assessments, links to resources, and pictures of our students working. Since we are just beginning this system we do not have full access yet, but eventually we will include our lesson plans and house our grade books too. We scheduled time to sit down and create her welcome page on ItsLearning. On her class page she added: announcements, links for resources, images, reading books, a section for parents, and a link to view student grades.

**Skill and Affective Changes**

In my opinion Ms. Jones really enjoyed this session with me. She was able to maneuver through the ItsLearning site easily and upload several documents to her class page. She seemed to appreciate the fact that several of our current resources will disappear once ItsLearning is used by the entire system. Even though the planning and the gradebook portion is not currently available she was able to hyperlink it to her page, so parents could easily view their child’s grades. We both agreed that having a one stop shop will cut down on the confusion and provide our parents and teachers with just one easy to use resource.

**Challenges and Solutions**

I felt that this coaching session went fairly well for the both of us. She was not resistant to change, in fact she was seeking out a necessary change to make her life easier. I feel that her own personal reflection really drove this coaching session. It did make me feel valued that she came to talk with me about her concerns. Normally we talk during our collaborative planning, but this time she sought me out for my advice. Even though I am not a homeroom teacher, this session really made me more aware of the challenges and demands that our homeroom teachers face. Providing our teachers with just one resource is not only smarter, but it will also cut down on time spent searching through our system-wide resources.

**Session #4:**

**Instructional Coaching Strategies**

The brainstorming for our fourth coaching session began during one of our collaborative planning sessions. I plan with grades K-2 once a week and during this time I am differentiating lesson plans for my gifted students and creating my lesson plans for my advanced content students. During this collaborative planning session Ms. Jones and I were discussing her guided reading groups. She has been trying to find first grade reading passages about Benjamin Franklin, Theodore Roosevelt, and Harriet Tubman. She shared with me the Fountas & Pinnell reading levels of her students, so I could accurately find reading passages for her students. One resource that I felt would be easy to use and free is [readworks.org](http://www.readworks.org/). Within this resource you can find leveled reading passages that include question sets, novel study units, skill and strategy units, and comprehension units. For this coaching session the two strategies that I used were: collaboration and dialogue (p.25). During our time together we spent a great deal talking about the strengths and weaknesses of her students. We also talked about strategies and materials that she was using to teach her students about these famous historians.

Along with sharing this resource with her, I also shared with her a great resource to use and it could be embedded in her class page on ItsLearning. The resource that I shared with her is called Padlet. Padlet is a great way to extend her students reading reflection so they can reflect critically and communicate their ideas from their reading. I was able to come into her classroom during guided reading. During this time she has an early intervention specialist in her classroom, so we were each able to take a guided reading group and read about Harriet Tubman. Each group read about Harriet Tubman, but they were using reading passages that went along with their reading level. After the guided reading groups, we had the students log onto ItsLearning and click on the Padlet link. Once on the Padlet screen we encouraged the students to use complete sentences to share what they had learned about Harriet Tubman. Later Ms. Jones reviewed the Padlet board with the students to help them reflect deeper and clear up any miscommunications.

**Skill and Affective Changes**

After sharing these two resources with Ms. Jones she was extremely receptive to using them. The readworks resource had a lot of great leveled passages that she could easily print off and use with her guided reading groups. In my opinion this really gave her students an opportunity to read about historians or famous Americans on their reading level. She enjoyed using Padlet, but I am unsure if she will use it again. I mainly believe this because of time management and the expectations of her students. I noticed during our session together that several of her students struggled with creating complete sentences. As we continue our coaching sessions I am seeing her include more technology into her curriculum. Initially I felt that her technology usage was a solid Level 1 Awareness, but moving towards a Level 2 Exploration.

**Challenges and Solutions**

I felt that we had a good coaching session that really helped her provide resources to help differentiate for her guided reading groups. I do think that the only challenge that we encountered was during Padlet. Some of her students struggled with creating complete sentences to retell facts that they had learned about Harriet Tubman. I also noticed that many of her students struggled with the typing portion too. I think we could have solved this by pairing students up that were in different reading groups. This would increase the dialogue and help those students that need assistance creating complete sentences. Also, I believe as our students are engaged with technology more than their knowledge of the keyboard will increase too.

**Session #5**

**Instructional Coaching Strategies**

Our final coaching session began during our first grade collaborative planning time. As the first grade teachers were meeting we began discussing our student’s performance on the recent quarterly benchmark assessment. While we were breaking down the data we all noticed that this set of first graders is struggling with their math fluency. I have also noticed this during our advanced content math classes too. We all believe that until they have a firm grasp of their facts they are going to continue to struggle. As the first grade team made suggestions, added resources to their weekly homework charts, I mentioned to them a resource called [MobyMax](http://www.mobymax.com/curriculum/fact-fluency). MobyMax is a free resource for the K-8 curriculum that provides your students with modules, games, practice, and for teachers it also provides them with real-time information on how your students are progressing.

During this session the two strategies that I used were: dialogue and reciprocity (p. 26). I chose this strategy because as we were discussing our student’s weaknesses, we were able to learn from one another and use that knowledge to impact all of our students. In Ms. Jones’ class we decided to use MobyMax as both a center and also encourage our parents to use this resource at home at least one hour each week. After looking over the resource all of the first grade teachers decided to use this resource as well in their classrooms. I pushed into Ms. Jones’ guided math block while she reviewing the concept of fact fluency during her number talks. Together we organized a game called, Scoot. During the game students had approximately 10-15 seconds to solve the problem or they couldn’t move on. Many students were surprised that they did not do as well as they thought they would. We previewed the MobyMax site with our students to increase their knowledge and also so they would understand our expectations. The students then logged onto ItsLearning where she embedded the MobyMax link. We showed them how to log on and get started with their fluency pre-assessment. As students mastered their facts they were able to earn certificates and play games for a short period of time before the game ended.

**Skill and Affective Changes**

Both Ms. Jones and I found that this session was really beneficial to our students. After I demonstrated how easy it was to use, she was able to lead her team in some peer coaching. While she was helping her teammates I was able to see her confidence and ability grow from our first session until this final session. I can definitely see how our time together has influenced her use of technology from just the basics to including differentiation and meaningful assignments for her students. During this session we all had a shared responsibility to make sure that our students succeed.

**Challenges and Solutions**

During this session we both enjoyed the success of her students and how engaged they were. I feel that the most challenging part was my interaction with the other first grade teachers. They were all extremely kind, but there was a sense of sceptic undertone throughout this planning session with one teacher. As I was sharing the MobyMax resource this particular teacher was not as receptive or willing to learn as the others were. In my opinion, I believe that maybe she felt that this resource was not going to solve our student’s fluency problems immediately. I tried to explain to her that it was not going to solve their fluency problems instantaneously, but with continued use, exposure, and changes to our teaching practices would help increase our student’s math fact fluency. Fortunately, my collaborating teacher was not swayed by her feelings and in fact she seemed energized. I do feel that as time passes this teacher will see the benefit of many of our resources as her teammates use them.

**References**

Knight, J. (2007). *Instructional Coaching: A partnership approach to improving instruction*.

Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

**Appendix:**

**Instructional Technology Coaching Form**

Teacher: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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| --- | --- |
| Observation Date: | Date for Debriefing: |
| Conversations with the teacher:   * *How is everything going?* * *How can I help?* * *What instructional technology resources are you currently using?* * *Strengths and weaknesses* * *What are the desired goals and outcomes for this lesson?* * *Any special needs that I need to be aware of?* | Notes: |
| Coaching Focus Area: | Notes: |
| What was supposed to happen: | |
| What was successful and what could be done differently for a more refined delivery? | |
| What progress did students make towards their goal today? (Based on what evidence) | |
| Additional Comments: | |