

Coaching Journal – Taylor Elementary School

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Coaching Session 1 (March 7, 2018):

Strategy

The first session I scheduled was to get to know Mrs. Caviness and have a conversation with her about what she felt was most needed in her classroom regarding technology. My principal recommended that I work with Mrs. Caviness because she was eager to learn about technology and had a lot of needs in this area. Knight (2007) states that instructional coaching has three starting stages which include enrolling, identifying, and explaining (p. 89). Since the teacher I was coaching already wanted to work with me I really just needed to figure out what she needed from me. I started out with a first meeting conversation which Knight (2007) explains as both teachers sharing a goal that they will be working on throughout the coaching sessions. Having this dialogue was very valuable because it showed me what our future meetings would be about and gave both Mrs. Caviness and I an idea of where we were heading and what the result of our sessions would be.

Mrs. Caviness and I decided that what she needed the most out of the sessions was ways to differentiate in her classroom. She is a special education teacher, and her goal was to be able to have more strategies to use technology in her class to meet the needs of every student. Through this collaborative conversation, we came up with a plan that I would show her how to use Wizer.me and the group function on our counties LMS to help with differentiation. The good thing about working with Mrs. Caviness is that I already work with her students in my math class, so she was able to watch me model a lesson using the tools. We wrote out a plan for the upcoming meetings. The primary focus of this first meeting was to show Mrs. Caviness that her needs were going to be met and that I was there to work with her as team not tell her what to do.

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I wanted to be sure that I built a trusting relationship with her so that she could develop competence with the technology that I would be teaching her in the next session (Knight, p.111)

Skills and Affective Changes

I noticed a change in Mrs. Caviness' comfort level throughout the first coaching session, even though she was excited and willing to learn she came in expecting me to show her technology and that her job would be just to sit back listen. At first, she was quiet and answered my questions with short responses. As the session went on and I built her trust as well as made her feel that we were both learning, and in this together she felt more able to talk and tell me about the needs for her classroom and her students. It showed me that having conversations right away with other teachers helps them feel comfortable enough to open up and ask for help when they need it. As the session went on, we talked about all of her technology needs and set a goal. I could tell that she did not expect the meeting to be about her but she seemed very eager to meet again by the end of the conversation.

Reflection on Challenges and Solution

I felt as if getting to know Mrs. Caviness helped me build her trust and affirmed that getting to know teachers is the best way to build their trust and show them that you are a team. The challenge I face is not having enough time in my current position to help as I would like. I am a classroom teacher, so I don't have a lot of time during the day to talk with teachers and come up with coaching plans for their needs. I would like to get into a role that I could spend more time working with teachers and finding their needs. A solution is to practice working with a few teachers now and get better and better at coaching and then find a role in the future that gives me more time for coaching.

Coaching Session 2 (March 14, 2018):

Strategy

During my second coaching session with Mrs. Caviness I started using the components of coaching discussed by Knight (2007): model, observe and collaboratively explore data (p.109). Since I teach many of Mrs. Caviness' students during math, it is easy for her to observe my lesson. In our first session, we discussed using Wizer.me in the classroom to find data on students then place them into groups based on that data. Mrs. Caviness first watched me use Wizer.me in my classroom and took notes on questions and ideas that she wanted to use in her room. By watching me model how to use the technology in my classroom and then use the data from that session to form groups Mrs. Caviness is empowered to master this practice in her classroom (Knight, 2007, p.110). After I modeled the use of Wizer.me, we talked about techniques that helped students use the Wizer page as well as what techniques I used to guide students. During this collaborative conversation, we were able to come to conclusions and a plan for using Wizer in Mrs. Caviness' classroom. Mrs. Caviness also discussed that she learned a lot by watching me model a lesson. She said that she thought it was very valuable and made her feel more comfortable in using it in her classroom. This is an idea that Knight (2007) discusses called "tacit knowledge" which is the knowledge that I didn't know or think about (p. 120). There are many things that I would not teach, but Mrs. Caviness was able to see during the modeled lesson.

After having the collaborative conversation, I had handouts ready for Mrs. Caviness to make her Wizer.me for her classroom. We talked through the handouts, and I helped her get started on making her Wizer document so that in the next session I would be able to observe her

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using Wizer in her classroom. She had a hard copy of the handout as well as an online copy to guide her through the steps in case she needed extra help.

Skills and Affective Changes

In this session, I could tell that Mrs. Caviness was feeling nervous about having to teach in front of me even though I told her that I would be modeling first and she would have a week to prepare she still seemed apprehensive to the idea of modeling a lesson for me. As we talked and after she watched me model the teaching she seemed more confident in her ability to do the lesson in front of me. I could tell that she realized that the lesson did not have to be too involved and that she didn't have to create an elaborate lesson for me to watch. It could be simple and focus on the technology usage in her room. As we talked, she told me that she thought it would be a lot of planning and that if I were watching her, she would have to be sure to hit every point specifically. She said that she felt better after watching me because my lesson was less involved than she expected. She noted that the modeling helped her feel better.

Reflection on Challenges and Solution

One challenge of this session was making sure that I followed the lesson and modeled everything that I wanted to show Mrs. Caviness. I had to make sure that I taught everything the correct way. At first, I was very nervous thinking that if I didn't explain something correctly or use a tool the right way it would be a huge deal but after reading more I realized that if something wasn't perfect, it was okay because that is what the collaborative conversation after the modeling was for. I was able to discuss and be honest about things I could have done better or changed with Mrs. Caviness, and I could tell this made her feel comfortable enough and know that it was okay to make mistakes.

Coaching Session 3 (March 21, 2018):

Strategy

In the third session, the goal was for me to observe Mrs. Caviness when doing a lesson using Wizer.me. The day before I was going to watch her she came to me and explained that she did not feel ready yet. We had a discussion about how she could give it a try and then we could talk about the challenges, but her main issue was with Wizer.me and making a proper assessment. We decided to postpone the “I watch you” session to the next week so that we could meet and talk about the technology again. Because we were going over the same ideas that we worked on in the last session, I decided to set a goal to practice the use of the partnership approach. As Knight (2007) discusses the partnership approach creates an atmosphere where teachers learn more, are more engaged, and enjoy themselves more (p. 39). I was using this approach in the last sessions, but I wanted to set a few goals before starting this session. My goals were to make sure that Mrs. Caviness felt equal to me in her learning and to make sure that we had an authentic dialogue on what she needed from me to feel comfortable enough to teach a lesson (Knight, 2007, p. 40-470).

Using the partnership approach, we sat down together, and we reviewed our goals from the first session as well as the information from the observation the previous week. As we talked, Mrs. Caviness told me she was not worried about modeling a lesson she was concerned about her knowledge of the technology. After getting into a more in-depth dialogue about what she needed out of the session, we worked on creating the Wizer.me together and mapped out the content she

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wanted to use in the Wizer. I ended up using another strategy when trying to decide on material for the Wizer. I created a content map with Mrs. Caviness to help her see the big picture of what data she wanted to get out of this lesson. Knight (2007) stresses the importance of concept maps and talks about how a content map can help the teacher and the instructional coach focus and document what they are talking about to come up with a plan for teaching (p. 153). The concept map helped us decide on a topic for the Wizer and create a document that could help place students into differentiated groups which were the overall goals for the sessions. After this session, Mrs. Caviness felt comfortable enough to set a date to model this lesson with her class so that we could discuss it. The next time we meet, I will be able to watch as Mrs. Caviness teaches and we will have a conversation about what she did well and what she can still work on.

Skills and Affective Changes

In this session, I saw a significant change in Mrs. Caviness' confidence. At the beginning of the meeting, she came in very upset and frustrated that she had to cancel the observation. She felt like she was going to make me angry that she did not do what she was supposed to do. I made sure to explain that these sessions were about her and not about what I want. I also made sure to clarify that we were in this together. After we talked through her feelings and how we could fix it we were able to work on the content of the session, and by the end, she was excited and ready to teach the lesson. I could tell that she just needed more guidance and for me to slow down and she felt much better. I was glad to see this change in her attitude because it showed me that sometimes things don't go as planned and you have to come up with a solution. Mrs. Caviness has gotten more comfortable throughout all of the sessions, but I saw a significant change in the meeting because she felt like I listened when she had a problem, and I was there for her when she was stressed.

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Reflection on Challenges and Solution

One challenge I had in this session was feeling like I had failed in the previous session. After leaving meeting two, I felt as if it went perfectly and that Mrs. Caviness was ready to do a lesson on her own. This was not the case, and I felt terrible that she was so stressed about the session. I felt like I had messed up and that I was not able to teach the correct way or be a good instructional coach. This was hard for me. I had to remind myself that sometimes things don't go perfectly and I may need to come up with a different approach. In the Knight (2007) text, they talk about tactics that instructional coaches should follow and this situation made me think of tactic 2: walk on solid ground. This tactic discusses how technology coaches need to work out their beliefs about the principles of being a technology coach (p.203). This situation showed me that I know the principles and that I can walk on solid ground. At first, I panicked thinking that I did something wrong, but after session three I felt like I knew what I was doing and just needed to change my strategy to make sure that Mrs. Caviness felt comfortable. I learned that in the future I shouldn't take anything to heart but be flexible and ready to change at any moment.

Resources

Knight, J. (2007). *Instructional Coaching: A Partnership Approach to Improving Instruction*.
Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.