

Coaching Journal

Cynthia Reneau – ITEC 7460

Teacher: Christie Atkins

1st Session:

Strategies:

During the first session Christie and I discussed her technology needs and what her main goals for technology and technology integration improvement in her curriculum. Christie expressed to me that she didn't used much technology and felt uncomfortable using it in the classroom. We assessed her current skills and how I could easily train her in small sessions to gain those skills she so desperately desired to learn. We made a list of skills ranging from urgently needed to nice to have. Some of the skills on her list are Darlington website (gradebook, assignments, gallery and curriculum connections), Mac OSX with file organization, Google Apps, Evernote, Web 2.0 tools for her class, picture editing and iMovie.

Two of Knight's seven principals were applied during this session, equality and choice. I began my first session with Christie talking about an old friend of ours that had recently retired from teaching that led in to a grandchildren discussion. I was then able to show pictures of my two babies, which I feel brought the session into a more personal session. She was able to see me as an equal instead of a higher-level administrator that was there to criticize her for her lack of technology knowledge. To give her more of an equality feeling we began talking about technology but I asked her to give me her honest input and what I could do to help her comfort level. I also discussed her math knowledge and explained that with her excellent work in the math department, technology would be a breeze with just small steps. I believe I made her have that feeling of equality by stating that her math knowledge was far beyond anything I could ever understand and my technology knowledge paled in comparison to that.

The second principal, choice, was applied by discussing with her the everyday struggles she has with technology. I did not force any skills on her that I believed she needed but asked her to make a list with me of things she wanted to learn on her MacBook. She discussed the things she needed for work but then lightly mentioned that she would love to learn how to work with pictures so she could make some picture books she's seen. I explained to her that any technology she would like to learn would be helpful for not only her knowledge but it would help her to integrate technology into the classroom. Knight discusses in his book that, "ICs who offer meaningful choices take steps toward making real partnerships come alive." (Knight 2007)

Skill and Affective Changes:

A big portion of our first session was building a good relationship, allowing her to make choices of what kind of technology she wanted to learn, and a small amount of time on the computer for her to show me the struggles she wanted to overcome. She also discussed that she wanted to do a project with her Geometry class but didn't even know how to begin. She explained to me that she would like her 10th and 11th graders to partner with the 2nd and 3rd grade by having her class make videos that showed different shapes. She said she was afraid to do it because she didn't have the knowledge on how to begin.

She showed me some things about her grade book and assignments page that were a big frustration for her and I was able to show her how to create new test and homework entries and how to enter the percentages for the grades. She successfully entered one on her own and said she would practice it. She was very happy and said it would be so nice to do this herself without having someone in her department log in and do it for her.

With time running out, I decided to quickly discuss the technology project she would like to initiate in her Geometry class. I explained that there wasn't any reason why we couldn't move forward with this exciting new project and with my coaching and help it would be a success. She was very apprehensive at the beginning of the conversation but after ensuring her that I would be there every step of the way, I saw that she was accepting and willing to go forward with this new idea. I saw an extreme affective change in this veteran teacher in not only the first two skills, grade book and assignments page, but also in the willingness to include technology in her curriculum. I believe this change was due to Knight's principals, specifically gaining that equal relationship so that she felt comfortable with me.

Reflection on Challenges and Solution:

The first coaching session went better than expected. I felt that Christie and I really connected and although her reputation of being a strong willed veteran teacher fed my skepticism, I was able to break the wall between Christie and her computer giving her a more open mind about using technology personally and in the classroom. In my experience, if a teacher learns fun things on their computer they possibly will be more inclined to use it in the classroom. Explaining to Christie that I would be most delighted to help her make picture books of her family lit a twinkle in her eye of encouragement. I went in thinking I would have so many challenges and set backs but found that using the partnership philosophy helped me to develop a good relationship with Christie therefore making the first session successful. The solution to Christie's technology issues will be easily solved now that we have developed a good partner and working relationship. As Jim Knight stresses that building an emotional connection will show genuine respect for one another therefore, I believe, bridging the gap between technology integration and the classroom.

2nd Session:

Strategies:

The second session began with Christie and I talking about how she felt about working with the grade book and was she able to practice what she had learned the previous week. Christie was very proud of herself to report that she entered two new homework entries into the grade book without any assistance. She was apprehensive in the beginning thinking that she would not be able to do it but with her notes that she had taken she was able to successfully practice the new skill. The main strategy for this session was to continue with her choices of what she wanted to learn and to show her how she could incorporate this in her curriculum. Knight has taught us that having a good and consistent dialogue will create an exciting community of thought, bouncing off ideas to solve problems. By having this dialogue with Christie and allowing her to feel free to voice her concerns, we were able to plan and learn new things to incorporate technology into her curriculum.

Skill and Affective Changes:

Christie and I started out by logging on to her assignment page. The assignment page is on the Darlington website that allows teachers to post daily assignments up to a school year in advance. These pages allow teachers to write dialogue, post external links, pictures, PDFs and any other type of teaching enhancements for the student to access. This puts all the information and organizes the student's work, so there is no need for a student planner or for the teacher to email resources to each student. Christie has been struggling with how to place links and files on the external page. She has successfully been able to create assignment blocks for each day, but was confused on how to attach a PDF or video. As we began, Christie got out her paper and pen to take notes and I suggested we have a small lesson on Evernote first, another skill she wanted to learn, so she could take notes and have them organized for each access. I asked her opinion on keeping up with those legal pads and did she find that she was spending way too much time locating notes she needed. She agreed and I asked her, "what if you were at home and wanted to practice these skills and your legal pad was on your desk?" She laughed and admitted that this type of thing happened more that she would like to confess. I explained that all her notes in Evernote could be accessed from her computer, iPhone, iPad or any other computer with Internet access. She was thrilled to learn this new skill and full of excitement to get started. We signed her up for an Evernote account and she was delighted to see that she was taking notes and organizing them into notebooks within fifteen minutes. She then expressed great stress when I opened up the Internet browser and stated that she would never be able to take notes and use the Internet at the same time. This led to another skill she wanted to learn which was Mac OSX. I showed her how to have multiple desktops by swiping three fingers straight up. We added another desktop and opened up Evernote to take notes on our session for her to use when practicing. I then showed her how to swipe three fingers left or right to change to the different desktops. So as I would show her a new skill on the assignments page, she would swipe three fingers across to access Evernote and take a few notes for her to use at a later time. Christie learned how to put files in her WWW folder for easy access to the assignments page. I explained to her that when she put items in that folder, they were loaded on the website and she just had to drag and drop them on her assignments page. We practiced adding links, pictures and dialogue to the assignments page therefore also practicing Evernote and OSX skills at the same time. I am slowly seeing Christie change toward being a good technology user. After just two sessions, I'm seeing her becoming more comfortable and excited about using technology every day.

As we began to run out of time, Christie was upset because there were more things she wanted to talk about such as the upcoming project. She was worried about creating a rubric and project outline. She indicated that her time was very limited over the next couple of weeks and wanted to start the project in a week and a half. I suggested that we have a session remotely and discuss creating the rubric and project outline, while using Google Apps. She chuckled at me, claiming that I was slipping in all these skills she wanted to learn and she didn't even realize it until now. Before our time ran out, I gave her a quick lesson on Google chat/hangout until she was comfortable using it. We planned a time on the next Saturday afternoon when she was free to meet remotely.

Reflection on Challenges and Solution:

The second coaching session was a huge success. Christie was able to brag on herself and show that she was successfully gaining these skills that she chose to be most important to her. The dialogue between us became more relaxed because she was able to voice her opinions and concerns with ease and did not feel threatened. Christie did become frustrated at one point during our session using the phrase, "I'm too technology illiterate to do all this." I felt challenged at this point because I did not want to seem overpowering by showing her too much. I wanted to tread lightly at this point, as I learned in the readings, so I wanted to find a solution for her but also not make her feel like it was too difficult for her to learn. By showing her the easy multiple desktop feature on the MacBook, she felt like she learned something so difficult and was a new whiz at the computer. It was my intention to slip in many skills all at one time giving her tiny bits of information that she could use successfully. I left this session feeling very good about what Christie had learned and about my own accomplishments in learning to be a successfully Instructional Coach. I believe that my main take away from this session is continuing that good relationship with Christie as well as allowing her to voice her own opinions about technology and how she would like to learn these skills. At this point in coaching Christie, I am excited to see if I can remotely teach her a new skill that we planned for our next session.

3rd Session:

Strategies:

The third session began with a phone call because Christie could not remember what I had instructed her to do to begin our remote session on Google Hangout. After a few minutes on the phone, we had our remote session going and were successfully video chatting. I told Christie that this skill was a part of her choice list and this was a Google App. She was very happy to hear this and was excited to video chat with some of her family that lived far away. I asked her if she felt comfortable doing this on her own and she said she was very excited to try because her family didn't think she could ever learn new technology. My strategy was to allow her to become comfortable in using Google hangout with family members and me so she would be more inclined to use it with students. I raised the question of possibly using this skill with her students for coaching classes and homework help. She was very excited to be able to do this with her students. This would allow her to spend more time at home with her son who had special needs. She could go home early and have these sessions during Darlington resident student study hall sessions, which are 7-9 pm Monday – Thursday. Knight teaches us that teachers should apply their learning to their real-life practice, which is Praxis (Knight 2007). For this session I used the Praxis strategy by showing her that while this Google Hangout was so much fun for us and with her family, it could be used and applied to her teaching practice as well. During this session I also applied equality, choice, voice and dialogue. Christie and I discussed with ease how to design this Geometry project. Christie felt equal with me by believing that her math skills were just as important as my technology skills and we could work together to successfully design this project. She was able to voice her opinions and help make choices on what the students should present in this project.

Skill and Affective Changes:

After logging into our remote session together, I first went into detail about the different aspects of Google hangout and how it was easily accessed through her Darlington Mail. While in her Darlington Gmail account she had access to all her coworkers as well as students to easily initiate Google Hangout sessions. She also learned that when logged into her account she could easily see who was online by the green dot next to their name. I explained that if the green dot was instead a video camera symbol in green, this user was online and had the video plugin installed so they could video chat with her.

After discussing Google hangout and she became comfortable with using it, I suggested we move on to start developing her Geometry project outline and rubric. I first told her that we should start a Google doc so we could begin to throw out ideas for this project outline. Christie was excited to tell me she had learned this skill in the last workshop I taught on Google docs in the classroom. She stated that she wasn't very good at it but would like to create the document and share it with me. Christie successfully created and shared the document with me and we were able to have great collaboration and dialogue on what should be included in the document. The outline included the students creating an iMovie with pictures, music and small video clips that would show Geometry shapes and would be appealing to the students in the Darlington Early Learning Academy. The students would spend time down at the academy taking pictures and videos with the students and then put them all into a video to show to classes at the Early Learning Academy.

Upon completing the outline we decided that we had a bit more time to discuss the rubric for the project. Christie expressed that she was great at rubric writing and could accomplish this. I was excited to hear this and I asked her how she wrote out the rubric. She explained that she had an old template that she'd been copying over for years and it got the job done. I asked her if she'd like to learn an easier way and also learn a new Web 2.0 tool that was on her choice list. She was thrilled to learn another skill. With Google Hangout there is a screen share option that allows you to view the other person's screen while you are chatting. I was able to have her share her screen with me so I could walk her through using the new tool. She navigated to the Web 2.0 tool called Rubistar located at <http://rubistar.4teachers.org>. Together with her amazing rubric writing skills as well as a new Web 2.0 tool we were able to produce an amazing rubric for the project. As I continue to work with Christie, I am seeing a big change in her skills after just three sessions. Christie is beginning to think about how she can use more technology skills with her daily activities instead of the old ways she did things in the past. She is seeing these skills as fun things to learn instead of difficult hurdles to jump. While designing the project I made the suggestion of having this project be more student centered and having them teach some of the skills during collaborative sessions. I explained to her that it really was "ok" for them to have more skills than we did and if they taught us, it really wasn't a bad thing. I showed her that we really were equal by saying that many of the students had taught me a lot of my technology tricks.

Reflection on Challenges and Solution:

Christie and I began our session on a bit of a rocky start. Our last session was very long and we discussed and learned many different skills. At the end of our last session we decided because of her lack of time, we would do a remote coaching session to not only find an easy time for her to meet but also to teach her the skill of using Google Hangout. Christ could not remember how to access Google Hangout but after a brief phone call we were able to get her going on the session. By talking to her on the phone, I was able to calm her

down a bit so she would not cancel our session. I was able to walk her through getting on to Google Hangout over the phone, which wound up being one of our most successful sessions.

Christie has come a long way since our first session. She is becoming more comfortable with using technology and is using it more often and with success. I have heard her on many occasions, at the lunch table or in passing, discussing her new skills with other teachers and I really see an overall change in her professional self-esteem. These sessions have helped me to understand how to communicate with teachers better and helped with my own practice of coaching teachers to become better technology users.

After finishing the outline, Christie expressed concerns about not knowing enough about picture and movie editing to have a successful project using these skills. I explained to her that I agreed that this was a challenge for her and had been a challenge for me in the past. We discussed me coming in to the classroom on many occasions to help with these skills for her and her students. She was thrilled with this idea and even the idea that we could allow this to be a student-centered project where there was lots of collaboration and teaching among the students themselves. I even told her that I could learn more about student-centered learning myself, and this would be the perfect opportunity for that. Knight explains that, "Instructional Coaches who live by the principal of reciprocity believe that teachers' knowledge and expertise are as important as their own." By engaging in dialogue with Christie about her field of expertise in student-centered learning and how she could teach me more about this, I was showing her that I felt her knowledge was just as important as mine.

4th Session:

Strategies:

The fourth session began in the classroom with Christie and her students. Prior to the session, I asked her if she would like a separate session without the students and she felt that since they were doing the project, it was going to be student-centered, and we were all going to engage in teaching and learning she wanted the students involved in this coaching session. I've been in many classrooms teaching skills to teachers and students but I felt this would be a good learning experience for me as well. Knight discusses the importance of "Encouraging Implementation" and how the fun starts when Instructional Coaches help teachers to implement new ideas in the classroom. I felt that reciprocity would also come into play for this session because I was going to rely on Christie to not only learn some new skills with her students but also I had faith in her skills as a Geometry teacher to explain her content. My strategies were to show Christie and her students basic photo editing, iMovie and screen casting skills thereby helping Christie learn new skills, creating a student-centered teaching and learning environment and learning more about student-centered collaboration myself. All of Knight's seven principals of the partnership philosophy would apply to this session. Christie and I have maintained equality, she has made her choice for the skills she wanted to acquire, she has voice in what her and her students will learn and feels comfortable speaking openly about it, the dialogue continues between us and now we are incorporating her class to continue with this good collaboration, reflection is used to consider allowing the students to be involved in this session, praxis is a big part of this session because of the skills being taught and we are of course at the level of reciprocity because we are all learning in this session together.

Skill and Affective Changes:

This session began on a long-block day, which gave me one hour and a half with Christie and her students. The strategy was to teach the students and Christie how to do basic photo editing, iMovie and screen casting for shape drawing. We began the session by introducing the project to the students. Christie talked about the different types of Geometry shapes and how we would be collaborating with the Early Learning Academy to take pictures and video for our projects. She explained to the students that this would be a time that we would all learn together and collaborate in many ways to make this a fun and exciting project. I then showed Christie and the students how to do basic photo editing with iPhoto. Christie had placed some sample photos on the assignment page, the skill she had learned in session two, and was able to quickly show the students how to access it. This was an important change that even the students noticed. She is becoming more comfortable with technology and can navigate quicker and is becoming more efficient with her skills. Christie and the students were quick to learn how to use iPhoto and Christie made the suggestion that if any student had any tips or tricks she would appreciate them showing us new ideas. One student suggested that we use the "side-by-side" feature in iPhoto so we could see multiple photos at once while editing. This student came to the front of the room to explain how to use it. This allowed me to learn more about student-centered learning and also gave Christie and the students new ideas about photo editing. We moved on to basic iMovie skills as well as screen casting with Quicktime. The session went very well and I was able to see more of a change in Christie and the use of technology. She felt comfortable using it and showing her students what she had learned on the assignments page. She is able to navigate quickly and more efficiently on her computer and feels more confident after four sessions.

Reflection on Challenges and Solution:

The fourth coaching session was very different for me and some-what challenging. I have been in many classrooms where I help teachers with technology, technology integration and the initiation of projects and ideas. This was my first time to not only be a coach to the teacher, teach the students and also learn from them by seeing how a student-centered project can be ultimately successful.

Students were very engaged during this long block day. They were excited about the project but also to give some of their ideas and show some of their skills to the class as well. I was able to be a good listener, allowing Christie to interject her own ideas on the project, as well as teach new skills to Christie and the students. I was also able to project my knowledge to them in a more learning instead of an overpowering way. Knight states that good dialogue enables people to think together and by allowing full dialogue during this session with Christie and her students we came together as equals and engaged in an exciting start to a great project. I learned a lot during this session. I was able to learn more how to become equal in a collaborative session that not only included teachers but students as well. I learned the importance of allowing students to also be teachers and how it encourages students to be more excited about learning. The students were engaged and it helped me to understand what I needed to do in the future to create better learning environments for students.

5th Sessions:

Strategies:

The fifth session with Christie was to elaborate on her new skills, talk about questions that she may have, and to touch on a few more skills she may want to work on. I wanted this session to reinforce my relationship with Christie but starting out with good dialogue and allowing her to talk about our previous sessions and lessons. By using this strategy, I believe that I was allowing her to continue to have a choice and a voice about what she wanted to learn. I wanted to continue to allow her to have the choice of what she wanted to learn and not push any skills that I put stress on her or a skill that she may feel that is unimportant for her work. Knight states that, "Voice also involves helping others to find the words to express what really matters in their lives." By continuing good dialogue with Christie, I believe I gave her the skills to speak out about her feelings on technology and what it was she wanted to learn and incorporate into her curriculum.

Christie was able to speak frankly with me and I feel we had developed a good relationship. She stated that she was very happy with everything she had learned and excited that I gave her so many options. She had been worried in the past about her job because she not only had a child with special needs, requiring her to sometimes leave work early, but also an older teacher. She felt that some of the newer teachers were coming in with all these new ideas and skills and she felt she could not keep up. She was very appreciative of me teaching her some new ideas that she could use and also wanted to continue to work with me until she was just as good as those new teachers.

We decided for this session that we would go over any lingering questions about previous sessions, learn a few more things about Mac OSX and Google Apps. These skills would increase her knowledge on her MacBook as well as give her more opportunities to work with her students on collaboration and Google Apps.

Skill and Affective Changes:

Christie and I started the session with discussing past sessions and we spent the first few minutes going over her questions that she had made up in Evernote. I was able to see a change in her skills on Evernote, she was now successfully using it to take note for classes, meetings and our sessions. She was able to navigate through the software effectively and was using it like a pro. Her series of questions had to do with iMovie, grading her student's projects and posting them on the Darlington Curriculum Connections page. We discussed many different points of iMovie and how her students would need to export their projects in order to upload them to the Darlington Curriculum Connections page. We went through the steps of exporting an iMovie, locating the file and uploading it. She again showed effective changes by being able to navigate through by using multiple desktops in OSX, effectively using iMovie menus and help documents, and using the Darlington Website.

Christie and I proceeded to discuss more skills in Mac OSX such as app switching, taking screen shots to give examples, preferences for her finder, and advanced keystrokes. I was able to give Christie some good training in Mac OSX during this session but the most important factor was my surprise of her changes of actually using the computer. She was able to use the computer with great comfort now and showed faster learning skills for the newer things I was teaching her. She actually took less notes during this session stating that she would probably retain these easier. I gave Christie a couple of handouts during this session on how to use key functions on the Mac and also if you used a windows computer years ago, here is how to do it in Mac OSX.

The last item we covered was creating forms in Google Apps. Christie inquired about learning how to do this so she could give short quizzes and also surveys to her students. She learned fast and was able to successfully create a Google form to send out to her students the next day.

During this session I was happy to see Christie using her computer more efficiently. She was able to navigate through the OS with little help and I felt my coaching sessions with her were a success. I don't want to take full credit for Christie's accomplishments. Christie spent many hours after our training sessions practicing and using these skills she had learned. I have taught many teachers how to use different technology skills only to find them either not using them or going back to the old way of doing things. Christie, on the other hand, showed great progress and was excited to learn more.

Reflection on Challenges and Solution:

The fifth session with Christie was even more successful than the four previous sessions. I didn't think that I've ever met a teacher that started out with very little technology knowledge and was so determined to show everyone that she could learn just as good as anyone. I was very proud of her and continued to express to her throughout every session that she was doing so great. I didn't want to say it as much as I wanted to, because I didn't want to make her feel like I didn't believe she really could do it. So I expressed my happiness for her learning and progress in a friendly way. I learned so many things for my own practice by coaching Christie. I learned how to listen to teacher's ideas and to see them as my equal. I've been in technology for over 25 years and when you are told so many times that you are a genius or that you know so much more than anyone; it has a tendency to make you feel superior. In my 20s I spent a lot of time being arrogant because I knew computers better than anyone and had the ability to do things the normal person could not do. It took me many years and after many mistakes to learn that I am not better than anyone else. This coaching assignment taught me even more. I am now able to listen to teachers, have good dialogue with them and gain a good emotional connection so I can be successful with technology integration at my school. Jim Knight's book discusses all of these things I learned by being an Instructional Coach for Christie Atkins. I think the one most important thing that connects the literature to the reality of Instructional Coaching is that if you develop a good relationship with a teacher by having good dialogue, letting them have a voice and make choices in what they want to learn, you will be successful in being a good Instructional Coach.

Christie and I will have an ongoing relationship on a personal level as well as professional. I will continue to coach her with her technology skills as well as her technology curriculum and she will continue to teach me how to have student-centered environments and how to approach teachers in a more inviting way. I didn't feel there were any challenges with this session because Christie had worked so many hours practicing her own skills that teaching her new ones were easy and actually fun. We now meet to talk about kids, grandkids and then incorporate some fun technology talk to throw around new ideas that we both can learn from.

References

Knight, J. (2009). *Instructional coaching a partnership approach to improving instruction : a multimedia kit for professional development*. Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Corwin.