

Individual Teacher Technology Use Assessment

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Assessment for learning is oxygen needed for learners' academic growth. Great teachers do not plan instruction until they are aware of what their students already know and what will help them master new knowledge and skills. Great coaches do the same. Carefully assessing background knowledge and expertise of teachers is the first step in making decisions about what professional changes need to take place and how they may be implemented in a school.

Assessment for learning in the coaching world means getting to know teachers, learning about their personalities and professional needs, observing their teaching, and having ongoing conversations.

A second grade teacher volunteered to participate in this coaching exercise. She has been a leader on the second grade team and built a reputation of a friendly personality with positive attitude. According to the color personality assessment completed at the beginning of last school year, this teacher is "blue." It means she is very acute to people's emotions and dislikes any type of confrontation. Her emotions and care for feelings of others drive her professional decisions. She is ready to sacrifice own interests to please people around her. Based on these descriptors, I know that it will be a challenge for me to work with this teacher without bruising her professional self-esteem or offending her in any way. Speaking my mind freely, questioning others' ideas, and relying on logic when making decisions are elements of my personality; therefore, I've chosen to carefully monitor my strategies for effective listening and intentionally focus my attention on every principle of the partnership philosophy (Knight, 2007). As I analyzed the outcomes of the LoTi and Adopter Level surveys, I carefully prepared questions for the interview with the teacher to make sure I would be able to collect information I needed without accidentally fracturing relationship between us.

On both surveys, the teacher has clearly indicated that she uses technology multiple times a day for personal and professional purposes. When an exciting new technological gadget comes out, she is first in line to get it. Technology helps the teacher collaborate with other team members on weekly lessons. Her team uses Planbook.com as an online platform for communication and collaboration, and she was the one who introduced and promoted its use among her colleagues (Rogers, J. M., personal communications). "I feel very confident in using the Promethean board as a tool for a majority of my lessons. It is the one tool that I use most often," she states on the LoTi survey. The fact that the teacher volunteered to participate in this coaching experience demonstrates her eagerness to learn new technology tools and strategies with which they can be implemented in daily instruction. Obviously, the teacher does not resent technology and loves to use new tools herself. Her willingness to partnership with the instructional technology coach and explore new, innovative strategies in her classroom immediately places this teacher outside of the Laggards and Late Majority adopter categories established by Everett Rogers (1995).

The teacher demonstrates leadership in integrating technology tools within her team and takes first steps in adopting them, and this fact helps us conclude that she falls into the Early Majority category. When asked how comfortable she feels when new technology tools and strategies are introduced in the school, the teacher has stated that she may use them if trainings convince her they may be useful in the classroom. In the LoTi survey, the teacher notes that she "would also like to develop more confidence in allowing students more options (digital tools) for projects." As her position on technology integration in the classroom, the teacher declares that it makes learning authentic and provides learning opportunities that could never be done without it. At the same time, however, she expresses her concern about allowing students to use technology

in the classroom: "I'm worried that something may come up and be a hiccup that I can't overcome." Evidently, the teacher needs support in the actual implementation of new technologies with her students even if she is convinced they will support student learning. Both characteristics classify her as an Early Majority adopter.

In regard to Levels of Teaching Innovation (LoTi), Level 2 is the stage at which this teacher plans and delivers instruction in the classroom. From multiple classroom observations conducted in the past two years, the number of activities that require low level thinking has been overwhelming. When technology is used by students, the activities focus on memorization and understanding. Raz-kids, Moby Max, Math Magician, and many other applications are used to practice math or reading fluency, matching vocabulary, and basic academic skills. After the interview with the teacher, it has been clear that the pedagogical component of the T-PAK needs improvement before any technology can be layered on it. Differentiation, high order thinking, and questioning techniques have become the focus of this coaching experience since progressing to a higher LoTi level without these strategies is impossible.

During the interview, the teacher articulated "more integrating activities for communication and collaboration among students" as one of her professional needs, and her statements from the LoTi survey support this goal as well. The teacher says that her students never use digital tools to communicate what they learn to audience outside of the classroom or collaborate with others. Higher order questioning techniques promote conversations which, in turn, will lead to communication and collaboration. To achieve this goal, a decision has been made to meet once a week to discuss the following week's ELA lesson plans and ensure that differentiation and critical thinking are addressed and technology is used to support at least one of the activities.

Another goal for the teacher's professional learning is managing technology-based activities. "I am overwhelmed with how to properly manage differentiated activities and offer as much support as they need with technology," she states in the LoTi survey. "I am too controlling and need to feel more comfortable with putting my students in charge of their learning. It is something I want to work on, but I am not always sure where to start," she writes in her response to what she wants to learn. We both have agreed that modeling will be the most effective strategy to address this need. As a result, I conduct mini-lessons with her students at least three times a week during their guided reading lessons. A gradual release should allow the teacher to feel more confident when implementing the same strategies independently. Observations and constructive feedback will help both of us to evaluate and reflect on professional learning throughout all coaching sessions.

Ultimately, I will be working with the students at least three times a week for 40 minutes to model new technology tools and differentiating techniques. At the end of each week, we will meet in person to reflect on the implemented lessons (the Reflect to Act form will be used for this purpose) and collaborate on ELA lessons for the following week. In addition, daily communications via emails will take place. The teacher will share the lesson ideas with her team and start coaching them to support student learning in their classrooms. I hope that changing one teacher at a time will develop into a ripple effect, and others will want to learn, too.

## References

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

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