

5-15-2014

Moving from the what to the how : the effects of instructional coaching on student engagement

Mark Maranto

Bank Street College of Education

Follow this and additional works at: <http://educate.bankstreet.edu/independent-studies>



Part of the [Teacher Education and Professional Development Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Maranto, M. (2014). Moving from the what to the how : the effects of instructional coaching on student engagement. *New York : Bank Street College of Education*. Retrieved from <http://educate.bankstreet.edu/independent-studies/57>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by Educate. It has been accepted for inclusion in Graduate Student Independent Studies by an authorized administrator of Educate. For more information, please contact kfreda@bankstreet.edu.

Moving from the What to the How:
The Effects of Instructional Coaching on Student Engagement

By Mark Maranto
Leadership in Technology and the Arts
Mentor: Ellis E. Scope, Ph.D.

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of
Master in Science in Education
Bank Street College of Education
2014

Abstract

Mark Maranto

Moving from the What to the How:

The Effects of Instructional Coaching on Student Engagement

Teaching has always been complex, challenging, and exhausting work; however, today's teachers face increasing pressures from both within and without their ranks. These demands come in the form of a new set of rigorous national standards adopted by most states in the country, stricter guidelines for teacher evaluation holding teachers responsible for student academic performance, negative public perception of teacher effectiveness, and a subsequent push to dismantle teacher tenure. In light of these challenges, and teacher attrition rates remaining consistently high for decades, recruitment and retention of effective teachers becomes critical to maintaining the integrity of what some still believe to be the noblest profession. Although the majority of teachers regularly receive professional development, many of these activities fail to effectively change teacher instructional practices, and, therefore, ultimately have little to no positive effect on student achievement. Many schools are, instead, opting to implement sustained, job-embedded, differentiated professional development in order to evince positive student outcomes. The rise of instructional coaches—teachers who work with teacher peers—has proven effective in providing the type of focused, sustained support teachers at any stage of their career need to integrate research-based, best instructional practices regularly in their classrooms. My study details the process of one-to-one instructional coaching. As an instructional coach, I worked with five teachers working in a large public high school in the suburbs of Chicago, exploring the question: what effect does one-to-one instructional coaching have on teacher pedagogical skill to improve student engagement?

Dedication

For Ellis E. Scope, Ph.D., Martha D. Elford, Ph.D., and Sharon Sheehan—giants on whose shoulders I have been fortunate enough to stand.

Table of Contents

Introduction.....	5
The School Setting.....	9
Instructional Coaching.....	13
The Partnership Principles.....	15
The Process.....	18
The Participants.....	26
Research Findings.....	37
Conclusions & Recommendations.....	41
References.....	44
Appendices.....	47
Permission Letter.....	62

Introduction

Now, more than ever, teaching is complex, challenging, and deeply taxing work. On a typical school day, Kauchak and Eggen (2005) argue, teachers are required to confront upwards of 1,500 educational decisions (as cited in Knight, 2014, p.6). In addition to the myriad daily judgment calls on a panoply of issues teachers must make in an instant, and the ever-present demands of serving the varying academic and social-emotional needs of an increasingly diverse student population, today's teachers also now face unprecedented and mounting pressures from both within and without our ranks. In response to current negative public perception and an increasing focus on integrating a set of national standards across the majority of states in the country, state boards of education have responded by applying ever stricter evaluation guidelines for teachers, holding educators accountable in unparalleled ways for their students' ability to achieve on standardized assessments.

Granted, teachers have always felt responsible for the academic and social success of the students they serve, but the zeitgeist now places an even greater emphasis on teachers bearing the brunt of culpability for student growth, essentially ignoring the multiplicity of factors impacting students' lives. Some states and districts have gone so far as to link tenure rankings to a teacher's ability to demonstrate student cut scores on standardized tests. In just one instance, the state of Indiana began linking teacher tenure to student performance on state standardized assessments in 2001 (Carlson, 2013). Teachers whose students score highest on these assessments are awarded merit pay; conversely, those teachers whose students do not make the cut score move down on the seniority list and must immediately undergo a ninety-day remediation plan or risk dismissal (Carlson, 2013). In a recent California ruling, teacher tenure laws were challenged and deemed detrimental to securing students' rights to a quality education (White, 2014). In this current

competitive climate, teachers may well begin jockeying for higher rankings and lose the former secure protections of tenure; the very real possibility now exists that collaboration among faculty could well steadily decrease. In an already potentially isolative career, these changes could prove catastrophic to future national teacher recruitment and retention rates.

Teacher attrition has remained frighteningly high for decades—with an alarming nearly ten percent of novice teachers who opt to exit the profession after only one year of service and between forty and fifty percent leaving the career behind within the first five years (Ingersoll, 2012; Riggs, 2013). Moreover, pre-service teacher preparation programs have consistently proven insufficient in readying individuals for the reality of assuming the rigors of full-time teaching responsibilities (Ingersoll, 2012). Today, it is more critical than ever before for teachers at any stage of their careers to receive the vital support they need from their administrations and colleagues within and without their specific content areas to thrive—and not merely survive—in this profession. In light of the fact that terms of teacher service are being extended by many years across the majority of states attempting to rectify decades of mismanaged and under-funded pension systems, teacher retention must be addressed if states have any hope of not only recruiting and mentoring new talent, but also supporting and retaining their skilled teachers successfully into the future (Hefling, 2012).

Nationally, professional development opportunities provided to teachers are not lacking. Over nine out of every ten teachers receive approximately sixteen or more hours of workshop-style professional development from their school districts during any given school year. (Darling-Hammond, Wei, Andree, Richardson, & Orphano, 2009) This traditional professional development offered to teachers has proven woefully inadequate, however, at yielding the vital changes schools need to see among their teaching ranks. “What most teachers receive as

professional opportunities to learn are thin, sporadic, and of little use when it comes to improving teaching” (DeMonte, 2013). The fact that teachers require closer to fifty hours of substantial professional development in order to improve their skills and their students’ outcomes—but, sadly, receive less than half this time—compounds the problem. One-shot conferences, seminars, webinars, keynote speakers, and other forms of popular teacher professional development have quite simply failed to demonstrate teacher implementation of the research-based best instructional practices taught; furthermore, “short, one-shot workshops often don’t change teacher practice and have no effect on student achievement” (Yoon, Duncan, Lee, Scarloss, & Shapley, 2007). In light of the research refuting the viability of most traditional forms of teacher professional development, schools continuing to spend money on providing teachers with one-shot professional development is the commonly accepted definition of insanity: doing the same thing over and over and expecting different results. As school districts slowly begin to realize the ineffective nature and wasted costs of traditional teacher professional development, many are instead implementing sustained, job-embedded professional development programs in order to better serve teacher differentiated needs and provide the meaningful, ongoing support necessary for real and lasting change to teacher instructional practices (Knight, 2009). A culture of continuous professional learning is currently being created in many schools across the nation to improve the instructional skills of teachers.

One such teacher support model comes in the form of instructional coaching. (The process of one-to-one instructional coaching as defined by Jim Knight and implemented in my school will be more fully detailed in a subsequent section). Instructional coaches are experienced teachers already working within schools in various content areas whose assignments include dedicated time outside of their own classrooms of students to encourage the growth of

their fellow teacher colleagues in a non-evaluative, completely confidential, and sustained, supportive manner (Knight, 2007). For the last four and a half school years, in addition to teaching one class of English, I have also served in the role of instructional coach to support teachers' individual instructional goals. Teacher participation in my high school's instructional coaching program is entirely voluntary; the aim is always improving teachers' instructional practices in order to create the conditions whereby students can not only thrive—both in the academic and social-emotional spheres—but ultimately flourish both in school and in life.

As content experts, most teachers within my home school are perfectly comfortable and readily willing to speak about their curriculum; in truth, many of our teachers have had a direct hand in shaping their course curricula. Ask any teacher at Greenview High School about a particular unit plan, and he/she will most likely and proudly regale you with protracted descriptions of elegantly designed curricula including favorite classic literature, complex mathematics formulas, famous historic battles, or dazzling lab experiments. Cherished lessons abound in the discussions I have with teacher colleagues; however, instruction is another matter altogether. Deeply personal for my teacher colleagues, instructional approaches, routines, and practices—in most cases—are deeply tied to a teacher's sense of self. Teachers with a greater sense of self-efficacy are far more open to implementing new teaching practices that enhance student engagement and subsequent student achievement (Protheroe, 2007; Wolters & Daugherty, 2007). Instructional coaching intends to open up the dialogue about instructional practices between colleagues and support a teacher's pedagogical growth at any and all stages of a teacher's career. This study tracks my work with five high school teachers with different levels of teaching experience from various departments within my school setting (a large public high

school), and seeks to answer the question: how does one-to-one instructional coaching affect a teacher's pedagogical skill to improve student engagement?

The School Setting

Greenview, Illinois (the actual names of the city, high school, and teacher participants in the study have been changed to protect the anonymity of teachers) is an expansive suburb located approximately twenty miles north of the city of Chicago. Greenview is fourteen square miles and contains a population of nearly forty-five thousand residents. The median income for a family of four is \$125, 138. Rental prices are higher than suburbs in the surrounding area, and 84% of Greenview residents own their homes. The site of a former naval air base, The Green was re-developed a decade ago into a posh subdivision complete with retail shops, restaurants for every taste, condominiums, and luxury townhomes. The single-family homes located within the confines of The Green are priced starting in the million dollar range.

Greenview High School is the only large public high school serving all of the residents of Greenview. With a current enrollment of 2,900 students and projected growth to pass 3,000 students in the coming school years, Greenview High School is highly-regarded as a robust, destination secondary school for both students and teaching faculty alike. Families move to Greenview for the express purpose of having their children attend Greenview High School and, I would say, for very good reason. With an average class size of 19.5 students and per pupil spending at \$12, 971 (nearly double the state average) it is safe to say that the students of Greenview High School are very well-served ("Illinois school report card," 2013). In a recent US News and World Report acknowledging the best high schools in America, Greenview High School was ranked twentieth in the State of Illinois and 503 nationally out of over nineteen-thousand high schools included in the study ("Best high schools," 2014). In addition to rigorous

core academics and diverse elective course offerings—including unique, popular programs in television and radio broadcasting, horticulture, and a 2008 Grammy Award winning music program—Greenview also offers over eighty extracurricular clubs, organizations, and activities. It is no surprise that nearly ninety percent of the overall student body becomes involved in sports and/or activities beyond the scope of the school day during their four year journey as students of Greenview High School.

The demographics of the Greenview High School student body are as follows: over 68% White, 1% Black, nearly 10% Hispanic, nearly 18% Asian, and approximately 3% bi or multi-racial. The school serves 20% low-income students, over 3% limited English proficient and 11% students with Individualized Education Plans. Greenview boasts an impressive 97% graduation rate with the majority of students attending four-year colleges post-graduation (“Illinois school report card,” 2013). There is a strong emphasis placed on community service, with many courses integrating service learning projects into the core curriculum. Each Thanksgiving, the school runs a massive canned food drive that supports both a local food pantry in Greenview and one in Chicago. The high school’s mission statement is succinctly stated as, “Greenview High School is a learning community dedicated to students and committed to quality of thought, word and deed.” The 2014-2015 school year marks my tenth year of teaching at Greenview High School. When I first signed my contract with the human resources director, she concluded the meeting by telling me to enjoy the rest of my career at Greenview High School. At the time, I found her statement presumptuous and, frankly, smug, as Greenview was the third school where I had taught in my then brief teaching career. Today, I can safely say that she was correct. Our school possesses an embarrassment of riches for both students and teachers. The word ‘no’ is rarely found in the vocabulary of administrators when speaking to teachers, be it a request for travel to

present at a conference, a new idea for starting a student club, or any and all desired continuing professional development opportunities.

However, not all teachers working within the walls of Greenview High School are quick to embrace change. The highly suspect nature of some veteran teachers across all departments—those who project a cynical attitude toward any new change initiative—has often slowed widespread change to instructional practices. These teachers chose instead to adopt a “this too shall pass” mentality. Teachers who resist might well feel that if they admit to needing help from other teachers, administrators, or instructional coaches, the very act of soliciting feedback will expose a self-perceived weakness in that particular teachers’ instructional practices. Not surprising, as author and surgeon Atul Gawande states, “human beings resist exposure and critique; our brains are well defended” (2011). Remember, teaching is, after all, deeply personal, and while many teachers are not only eager but more than willing to openly discuss what they teach (curriculum), few are courageous enough to demonstrate vulnerability around how they teach (instruction). If queried, not many veteran teachers at Greenview High School would admit to being resistant to change. They would rationalize their unwillingness to give and receive feedback on their instruction as the result of their already overly burdened schedules, too many school initiatives pulling them in far too many directions, and worst of all, they might even cite—and sometimes blame—students who are disengaged and disinterested in learning the lessons teachers deliver. Indeed, looking at the impressive statistics on student success and programmatic accolades Greenview High School has received, some teachers might even argue that change is neither necessary nor warranted. The ‘if it isn’t broke, don’t fix it approach’ is the first line of defense for many veteran faculty members unwilling to entertain the possibility that growth is critical to all professionals.

Despite pockets of resistance, the Greenview High School administration crafted organizational goals in 2010 with a preamble to the curricular and instructional goals that states: “we are a culture that gives, receives, and acts upon feedback.” These words outwardly espouse collaboration as a basic tenet of our large organization of nearly 250 full-time teachers: feedback is processed, valued, and implemented into teacher practice. In a desire and an effort to actively foster continuous teacher improvement, during the 2010-2011 school year, the administrative team—which includes the principal, the two assistant principals, and the department chairs for all content areas—also then drafted a list of “instructional norms” for the entire high school. Sadly, no teachers were involved in the creation of either the organizational goals or the instructional norms. The impetus for the addition of the norms was based on classroom observations from upper-level administration and what the principals interpreted as a widespread lack of teacher “best practice” in instruction throughout the building. In other words, the decision to craft norms emerged from a deficit model rather than one of capitalizing on the abundance of talent and creativity of teachers, and then disseminating these practices to both novice and veteran teachers. This initiative entirely top-down and motivated by what teachers were not doing with instruction that the administration would like to see implemented. As such, the administration designed one-shot meetings on student late start days to offer professional development on each of the five instructional norms. The first norm states that teachers should every day make the lesson’s learning objective clear for students. Teachers were given a single ninety-minute session on how to write objectives and ideas for disseminating the objective to their students. The faculty tried in earnest to practice writing clear, student-friendly learning objectives, but in the absence of any sustained support or subsequent measures of accountability, the practice soon atrophied for most teachers.

Instructional Coaching

At the start of 2010-2011 school year, the same school year that Greenview drafted and rolled out the five instructional norms to the teaching faculty, the administration also instituted an instructional coaching program, reassigning three experienced teachers already on faculty (myself included) to teach one class of high school students in their respective content areas but to spend the majority of their work-day partnering with teachers across departments to support individual teacher and curricular content team improvements to instruction. Although the administration continued to provide the ineffective, surface types of professional development opportunities to teachers such as presentations, key-note speakers, and one-shot workshops, the upper-level administration simultaneously recognized that implementing a new approach was critical, or teaching practices would remain at the very same level as they had been for decades.

In a stunning example of the disconnect between research and practice in education, the research base has actually revealed for decades now the necessity of greater support in order for teachers to experiment with and to integrate new and more effective teaching practices. Thirty years ago in 1984, Stanford University professor Robert N. Bush (as cited in Knight, 2009) conducted a five-year, landmark study on teacher staff development within eighty schools in the state of California. Bush analyzed the impact various approaches to professional development had on whether or not teachers tried new methods of instruction. He concluded that as the level of support for teachers was raised, so were the chances that teachers would implement new skills in their classrooms; conversely, when new instructional skills were disseminated without modeling, practice, or feedback—as was the case with Greenview’s instructional norms—only

10% of teachers subsequently attempted to use the proposed strategies. When teachers received ongoing support in the form of modeling, practice, feedback, and coaching, the rate of implementation jumped to a whopping 95% (as cited in Knight, 2009). Additionally, in 2002 Joyce and Showers (as cited in Gulamhussein, 2013)—the researchers who developed the peer coaching model—reinforced the need to support teachers during the steepest point in their learning curve: implementation. Their research concludes that, on average, teachers require twenty distinct instances of individual or partnered practice before a new instructional skill has been mastered and stands a fighting chance of becoming part of that teacher’s regular instructional repertoire. This is not surprising given the reality that “teaching is an extraordinarily complex and demanding form of professional practice” (Labaree, 2011). Admittedly, “jobs that involve the complexities of people seem to take the longest to master” (Gawande, 2011). Instructional coaches provide this critical high level of support for the complex work teachers undertake right at the very moment teachers need that support the most: as they are learning a new strategy and attempting to implement that strategy into their classroom with actual students.

Physician and author Atul Gawande believes that, “coaching done well may be the most effective intervention designed for human performance” (as cited in Knight, 2014, p. 37). In order to better understand the variety of approaches to and prevalence of coaching in contemporary culture, it is first important to trace the term ‘coach’ back to its origins. Historically, the first use of the word ‘coach’ occurs in the 1500’s and refers to Kocs, the Hungarian village where a “large kind of carriage” used to transport people was invented. In 1830, the term emerges again as slang at Oxford University where it then referred to a tutor who ‘carries’ students through their exams (Harper, 2014). Currently, this original notion of both support and transport remain. Coaches support their mentees throughout the process of

attempting to learn a new skill. In essence, coaches facilitate growth as their ‘players’ need them the most as they work toward mastery. Today, coaching is ubiquitous. From life coaches who hold their clients accountable for setting and achieving personal life goals, to executive coaches in business who work with newly promoted company leaders on how best to manage the people on their staff, coaching seems to have seeped into both the professional and personal spheres of contemporary life. A strip from the famous Dilbert cartoon series illustrates the pervasiveness of coaching in today’s work environments. Dilbert’s female colleague approaches his desk excitedly and asks a seated, laconic Dilbert, “Who’s up for some peer coaching?” Dilbert queries, “What?” His female colleague goes on to explain the process of peer coaching as she understands it. She says, “I’ll complain about all of my work problems while you sit there and listen. Then you’ll ask insightful questions that will cause me to come up with my own solutions.” Ever taciturn, Dilbert assents with a simple, “Okay” (Adams, 2013) While intended to be humorous, this cartoon accurately depicts the safe space and non-judgmental listening ear coaches provide for their colleagues to think through issues most important to the work they undertake daily with students. In truth, regardless of chosen profession, all human beings need to be heard, understood, and supported in order to feel like their work and their life has value.

In the world of education, coaching has rapidly grown in popularity over the last decade as schools begin to realize the need to support teachers as they translate the research base on best instructional practices into actual classroom practice. A Stanford University study on teacher professional development revealed that 45% of teachers reported receiving coaching and 63% stated that they had engaged in some form of peer observation in a given school year (Darling-Hammond, Chung Wei, Andree, Richardson, & Orphanos, 2009). These statistics are heartening, as they point to a willingness on the part of school districts to begin providing their

teachers with more of what works to encourage continuous improvements to instruction and better outcomes for students.

Although many forms of coaching with varying methods of delivery exist in schools-- including peer coaching, literacy coaching, cognitive coaching, classroom management coaching, and content coaching—the basic tenet of peer support for goal attainment remains the same. For instructional coaching in particular, teacher coaches are there for other teacher colleagues to assist in helping them to continuously improve their teaching (as cited in Knight, 2009). Greenview High School selected Jim Knight’s model of instructional coaching to follow as the protocol for their instructional coaching program. Knight (2009) and his colleagues at the University of Kansas Center for Research on Learning define instructional coaches as those teachers who “partner with teachers to help them incorporate research-based instructional practices into their teaching so that students will learn more effectively” (p. 18). Knight (2014, p. 39) has spent the last fifteen years researching, validating, and refining his instructional coaching model. Knight’s interest in the topic has grown out of the recognition that, “without follow-up, professional learning likely won’t change instruction.” However, with differentiated, ‘just-in-time’ support, teachers are making significant and exciting changes to their teaching.

The Partnership Principles

Before detailing the official protocol for instructional coaching as Jim Knight defines it, it is first important to address the key principles Knight believes underpin and promote the positive working relationship between coach and teacher colleague (see Appendix A). The main difference between a coach and a department chair or principal is that the coach is never an evaluator. A coach’s role is defined exclusively as a non-judgmental support, talking and listening to the teacher in order to promote growth in the areas of most pressing need for that

individual teacher. In order for the process to run smoothly, Knight details ‘partnership principles’ as a ‘theoretical framework’ that guide both teacher and coach (2007, p. 37). The seven principles Knight (2007) believes must form the basis of a successful coach and teacher relationship are: equality, choice, voice, dialogue, reflection, praxis, and reciprocity. Each of the partnership principles will be discussed in turn.

The teacher and coach are equal and willing partners in the work. No one person holds power over the other individual. Both are respected as professionals. Coaches must remain ever-vigilant that their potential desire for control—essential for their role as classroom teacher but detrimental as a coach—is held in check throughout the process (Knight 2007, 2013). The teacher and his/her coach need to always remain on equal footing in order for the work to feel non-evaluative and to be entirely productive. As such, teachers always choose the specific area of instruction they most desire to work on even when the coach may feel that other aspects of the teacher’s instruction demand more immediate attention. As difficult as it can be for coaches—who are themselves experienced teachers and knowledge-workers—they need to listen more than they talk. Jim Knight (2007) believes the main voice should be that of the teacher. Granted, the coach may also express his/her point of view, but only after the teacher has been given ample opportunity to verbalize the current teaching challenge as he/she views it. At this point, the authentic dialogue can begin in earnest. Each person—teacher and coach—is free to openly express ideas, challenges, and successes without fear of judgment or reprisal. The coach may suggest multiple instructional strategies for the same problem. The teacher is free to reject or accept ideas, but should always thoughtfully reflect on instructional practices that work well to engage students and deepen learning and, conversely, those that do not. Knight (2007) asserts that teacher and coach self-improvement is predicated on continuous reflection from both

members of the partnership. As instructional coaches are given release time from their full-time teaching responsibilities from their school district to work with teacher participants, Knight (2007, 2013) argues that coaches must be deeply knowledgeable of all the instructional practices they promote. It is not only the coach's job to research best instructional practices, but to then turn that research into a plan of action for the teacher participant. In instructional coaching, praxis means that the teacher trusts the coach to translate the research base into practical instructional strategies for implementation in the teacher's classroom. If all goes well, both parties benefit from the partnership. By working with teachers on implementing effective teaching strategies, my own teaching has vastly improved. This reciprocal positive relationship between teacher and coach many times extends far beyond a single cycle of one-to-one coaching into deep and lasting bonds that last for years of the teachers' careers (Knight, 2007, pp. 24-26). Coaches should always share the handout (see Appendix A) on the partnership principles Knight (2007) has laid out and discuss each principle with their teacher participants before any work on instruction begins. Once teachers understand this foundational relational piece of the work, the actual one-to-one cycle is ready to start.

The Process

The process of a one-to-one cycle of instructional coaching as Knight (2007, 2009, 2013, 2014) has defined and refined—and as Greenview High School has embraced—is surprisingly straightforward and designed intentionally to be so. This is due, at least in part, to the emphasis one-to-one coaching (Knight, 2007) places on reaching attainable, student-measurable goals for teacher participants. Recognizing that teaching is highly complex work encompassing many simultaneous moving parts (Green, 2014), one-to-one coaching assists teachers in addressing only one small goal at a time. In my career, I have experienced numerous times the racing

thoughts brought on by pondering how many aspects of my teaching demand attention simultaneously. This analysis, however, can lead to paralysis where nothing gets addressed because of the overwhelming and prodigious nature of change. Instead, the one-to-one process acknowledges that—despite all the various components that comprise highly effective teaching—teacher and coach can only take on only one aspect of instruction at a time. Knight argues (2007) that if and when the initial goal is met, the teacher and coach may choose to continue the work on other goals. In point of fact, there is always something to work on in teaching during any and all stages of a teacher's career. As both a classroom instructor and instructional coach, I find this exciting and precisely what makes the work feel fresh.

Knight (2007) says there are various strategies for enrolling teachers in the process of one-to-one coaching, but no one strategy represents an optimal approach—or silver bullet if you will—to getting teacher participants on board. Content area department meetings, full faculty presentations, emails, casual conversations in the cafeteria have all brought clients to my door; however, for me personally, the best way I have found to gather teacher participants is by actually working with them on the one-to-one process. Once engaged in the process, the teachers generally see the benefit of the support and attention they receive from working with me as their coach, continue working with a coach, and often times recommend coaching to teacher peers within their own departments who may have been reticent to try working with a coach.

When beginning the process with a teacher, I make it clear that there is plenty of choice in the process; however, there are also prescribed, non-negotiable steps to the cycle. Each cycle varies in length depending upon how quickly the teacher's goal is met. The teacher may change or abandon a particular goal. Because the process is entirely voluntary, the teacher may choose to discontinue the work at any time. In my four and a half years of experience in the role of

instructional coach, there have been only a few instances where teachers have chosen to stop the work entirely. In each of these instances, the teacher cited distracting personal or professional pressures but never discontent with me as their coach or the work itself.

Knight's process (2007, 2014) of one-to-one instructional coaching process always begins with an initial videotape of the teacher participant's selected focus class. If the teacher is comfortable, I ask if I may observe the selected class in real time. One thing is for certain. The thought of being videotaped is initially discomforting for most teachers with whom I have worked. Even though the GoPro camera technology we employ at Greenview High School is largely unobtrusive—the camera is the size of a deck of cards—watching oneself on camera raises most people's level of anxiety. Personally, I spend the first minutes of watching myself on every video hating the sound of my own voice and pondering the very next diet I need to embrace. Once past this initial shock, I recognize that the benefits of video far outweigh the deficits. Knight (2014) maintains that video is a necessary component of one-to-one coaching and subsequent teacher professional growth. For one, teachers are often unaware of what it looks like while they are teaching; having no sense of what students see when teachers teach could well prevent teachers from recognizing that any real changes to their instructional practices are ever necessary (Knight, 2014). Videotaping enables us as teachers to, "see that reality is very different from what we think" (Knight, 2014, p. 2). Determining current reality is an important point of departure for the work. The videotape serves as an objective other—a third thing. It is not what the coach thinks happened in the class. It is not what the teacher thinks happened in the class. It is what actually happened in the class. It is reality.

I make it entirely clear to my teacher participants that the videotape is first, last, and always the property of that particular teacher (Knight, 2014). The video is uploaded to a private

YouTube channel, and the link is made available only to the teacher and coach never to be shared with other teachers or administrators unless the participating teacher should choose to do so him/herself. For the first videotape, the coach and teacher watch the recorded lesson separately. I encourage the teacher to watch the entire videotape in one sitting so as to get a sense of the overall flow of the lesson. Knight (2007, 2014) recommends that the teacher and coach take notes on any and all parts of the videotape that stand out, both positively and negatively. Once both teacher and coach have had ample time to view the video, they meet again to discuss their impressions gleaned from the viewing. Knight (2007, 2014) advises coaches that they should be cognizant that this is the teacher's chance to express their initial findings from watching the video; therefore, the coach needs to listen intently for patterns of concern raised in the teacher's post-mortem of the viewing experience instead of, at this point in time, verbalizing the coach's own ideas.

Knight (2007, 2014) urges coaches to motivate the participating teacher to talk by beginning the conversation with a question like, "On a scale of one to ten, with a one being the worst lesson you ever taught and a ten being the greatest, what number would you assign the lesson from the videotape and why?" The coach's role at this point is to actively listen for any indicators of possible areas of instruction the teacher expresses concern over. The conversation should continue for as long the teacher feels like discussing the content of the lesson. The coach may, of course, interject comments or questions at points during the conversation, but he/she must remember not to sway the teacher toward the coach's perceived agenda for that particular teacher's plans for changes to instruction. Once patterns emerge in the teacher's debrief of the videotape, the coach is then ready to set the goal with the teacher for the first one-to-one cycle.

Having listened to the teacher's concerns, the coach asks the teacher if he/she feels ready to set the goal. Knight (2007, 2014) states that the parameters for goal setting are clear and should be explained to the participating teacher before the cycle begins. The goal needs to be based on instruction, student-measurable, and narrowly focused. Some teachers with whom I have worked tend to shift the conversation away from instruction into curriculum, citing concerns over the way in which the content of the videotaped lesson was designed instead of how it was delivered. While scope and sequence of curriculum is also critical to instructional success, instructional coaching is first, last, and always about improving instruction. Should teachers decide that curriculum is where they want to spend their time and energy, I can also assist them in that type of work; however, for the purposes of one-to-one coaching, I make it clear that the focus is only on instruction. Since serving students is the primary work of teachers, Knight (2007, 2014) asserts that the goal needs to be student-measurable, seeking a positive change in student academic or social behaviors. Finally, the goal should be manageable and attainable. For example, if the initial videotape reveals to the teacher that only a few students are participating in class discussions, the goal might be stated as, "80% of students will speak during class discussions." While the teacher's ultimate goal might be that all students verbally participate in classroom discussions with substantive comments every time a discussion takes place, the coach helps the teacher to set an initial reachable target. The percentages can always be adjusted up after the first target is met.

The following goals were developed with actual teacher participants from Greenview High School during the 2013-2014 school year. These teachers were involved in cycles of one-to-one coaching with four different instructional coaches:

- 90% time on task during direct instruction three classes in a row. Time on task was 68% during coach observations.
- Increase teacher praise to correction ratio to at least 3:1.
- 100% of students will check the answers to their homework problems every day.
- All students will be involved in three discussion activities per day.
- 90% of the students will be ready to work and have begun introductory activity within one minute of the bell.
- 100% of the students will limit their transition time between activities to 30 seconds.
- Increase use of informal spot checks during demonstration lessons to measure student understanding of new content.
- Partner/group students to maximize peer support while students complete practice and homework problems.
- Keep the level of student participation high during whole class discussion.
- Establish beginning and ending of class routines to increase student engagement.
- Employ strategies to establish more student-to-student interaction versus teacher-led direct instruction.
- Measuring student formal and casual response to adjust instruction to current needs. (i.e. increase casual formative assessment and response in real time)
- Increase the frequency of teacher-student interaction to 100% in each class
- Improve the frequency, deliverance, and clarity of the day's objective(s)

Before scheduling and proceeding to the next meeting where instructional strategies are suggested, discussed, and possibly modeled by the coach, the teacher and coach both write down

the goal and decide on how progress toward that goal will be measured. In the case of the goal for increasing student verbal participation to 80% of students during class discussions, the coach can easily measure this goal by obtaining a seating chart from the teacher and noting with a check for each time a different student speaks when completing the next observation. Simple division of the number of participating students by the number of students present in the class will reveal if the goal has been met or not.

In the next coach and teacher meeting, Knight (2007) recommends that instructional strategies most appropriate to achieving the teacher's goal are discussed. Since teachers are knowledge-workers and valued for their expertise within their selected content areas, the coach's recommendations never relate to specific content. Instead, the talk revolves around possible instructional strategies the teacher might employ to better achieve his/her specific content-related goals. The coach should always honor the partnership principle of choice (Knight, 2007) by offering the teacher several options the teacher might try or by researching a strategy the teacher requests he/she might like to try but has never had the time to learn the protocol for. Knight (2013, 2014) believes that teachers learn strategies in a variety of ways. Coaches may discuss the use of the strategy in their own classroom, or invite the teacher into the coach's classroom to observe the strategy in action. In other cases, the coach may call on other colleagues across content areas to model the strategy for the teacher. My coaching colleagues and I have been viewing videos from websites like The Teaching Channel where videos from actual teachers employing various instructional strategies are uploaded. Subsequently, we recommend videos we have vetted to our coaching clients. Coaches should always offer the teacher a handout on the strategy with a clearly outlined protocol for how the strategy is used in a step-by-step manner. Knight (2007) argues that handouts honor the partnership principle of praxis by turning the

research into a clear plan for instructional practice. If the teacher desires, the coach and teacher can also practice the strategy together without students present in the room.

When the teacher feels entirely ready and knows that he/she is going to employ the strategy intended to reach the goal, Knight (2014) promotes setting up a second observation and videotape. The coach serves as the recorder, observing the students to see if the strategy is having the desired effect. Going back to the example of 80% verbal participation, the teacher may only be conducting a full-class discussion for a scheduled fifteen minutes of the overall class time. The videotape captures the entire span of the class, but the coach would only then measure the fifteen minutes of discussion time using the seating chart to determine if the goal is met. Once again, the teacher and coach meet to discuss the quantitative findings from the coach's gathered data, and the teacher's overall impressions of this videotaped lesson. At this point, if the teacher feels comfortable, the coach and teacher may together watch the part of the videotape that served as the basis of the measurement. I have been offering my clients co-viewing as an option to foster additional points of discussion about what the teacher intended in practice and what I as the coach observed happened in practice. Of primary concern, however, is the data. If the target is reached, the teacher reflects on whether or not to continue with another cycle of coaching. If the goal is not met, the teacher and coach discuss the strategy employed to reach the goal. Perhaps the strategy was not implemented as planned or in the way the coach, the handout, and the practice required it be implemented in order to be successful. The very real possibility also exists that an alternate strategy would better suit this teacher's particular needs. If that is the case, a new strategy is selected, discussed, modeled, practiced, and implemented, and another observation is then scheduled.

Ultimately, Knight (2007, 2009, 2014) believes that a one-to-one cycle is about teacher and coach reflection on instructional practices. Greek philosopher Socrates once asserted, “The unexamined life is not worth living” (as cited in Gerzon, 2014). He did not say that an unexamined life is diminished by a lack of reflection, although one could argue that is most certainly true. He emphatically stated that self-reflection is a key component of life itself. While strong rhetoric, Socrates’ statement speaks to the critical need for all individuals to reflect on important aspects of their professional and personal lives for the purposes of solidifying beliefs and making necessary changes wherever they find their actions failing to match their core beliefs. Professionals in any field should continue to reflect on what works best in their practice and what changes are needed in order to continually learn and grow (Gawande, 2011). Teachers are no exception. By reflecting on the use of both new and effective research-based instructional strategies, teachers and coaches alike can, ultimately, better serve their students. As such, reflection throughout the one-to-one cycle is of paramount importance for both teacher and coach alike.

The Participants

In keeping with one of the fundamental tenets of instructional coaching, teacher participants volunteered to be a part of my study by signing an agreement form that stated my intention to fully respect their privacy by changing their names in my writing about our work together. All five teachers agreed to engage in at least one cycle of one-to-one coaching including at least two videotaped lessons and, subsequently, to fill out a ten question survey about their experience of working with me as their instructional coach. Although the work with some teachers encompassed most of the school year, the survey was distributed near the end of third quarter to ensure that each participant had completed a minimum of one cycle of one-to-one

coaching. The five teacher participants represented different content areas: two English teachers, one Social Studies teacher, one Mathematics teacher, and one Applied Technology teacher. The teachers included both novice and mid-career levels of teaching experience. Two teachers were in their first year of teaching, one was in his second year (but first year of teaching at the secondary level), and two had thirteen years of teaching experience each.

Without exception, all teachers' initial goal addressed the need for greater levels of student engagement in their classes. Not surprising, given the fact that Greenview's district-level goal of raising student engagement has been in effect for the last three school years. As teachers try to positively affect student engagement, it is also interesting to note the results of a Gallup poll on the "State of America's Schools" (Bidwell, 2014) that indicate teachers themselves do not report high levels of engagement in their own work in schools. Out of seven thousand teachers polled, a surprising seven out of every ten teachers reported that they were not emotionally connected to the work of teaching or were dissatisfied with the schools where they taught (Bidwell, 2014). Brandon Busteed, executive director of Gallup Education, reported, "For people who influence the engagement of a lot of young people in their classroom, it's really important. If anybody in the country should be more engaged in their job, it should be our teachers" (as cited in Bidwell, 2014). In my view, teacher participants, by virtue of the fact that they volunteered to actively work on being more engaged in their teaching in the hopes of increasing levels of student engagement, care deeply about their students' class experience. The Gallup poll concluded that teachers' engagement in their teaching directly related to the engagement levels of their students which also positively affected student achievement outcomes (Bidwell, 2014). The teachers with whom I worked all expressed their desire to see more engaged students in different ways, but the goal was essentially the same for all five teachers:

raise the level of student engagement in the hopes of improving outcomes for students. My study measures teachers' perceptions of improvement in student engagement levels after implementing various instructional strategies with the support of an instructional coach. In the following section, I detail the one-to-one instructional coaching process as it played out with my five different teacher participants.

The 2013-2014 school year was Dane's first year of teaching at Greenview High School. He had taught one previous year at a junior high school, but filled the spot of a retired and well-respected Greenview teacher of computer assisted drafting in the Applied Technology department. Dane is a bright, earnest, eager and affable novice teacher who heard about instructional coaching at a presentation the instructional coaches gave to new teachers during their induction week. He contacted me initially in the fall for help in crafting the wording of his professional goal. At that time, he expressed a desire to videotape himself teaching. Seeing this moment as serendipitous, I informed him that videotape served as a fundamental element of instructional coaching, and I asked Dane if he might be open to working with me as his coach on a one-to-one coaching cycle. He readily agreed. After the first videotape, Dane and I met to discuss his impressions of watching himself on video. He expressed what most teachers do when watching themselves for the first time on video. Dane noted repetitive, nervous verbal tics like, "OK" and "um," and he was highly self-critical of his teaching. After listening to Dane openly vent on all the aspects of his lesson that annoyed him, I asked, "Was there anything you liked?" I think this question surprised him. Dane thought for a long time, and then he began talking about how much time he spent on evenings and weekends preparing the computer demonstrations for his students so that they could better internalize the processes required of them in their own drafting. I affirmed the high quality of his demonstrations. He then reported that he worried his

direct instruction was taking too much time and that he was potentially losing the attention and engagement of most of his students. When I watched the video, I saw well-meaning students who grew increasingly bored as the demonstration stretched out for fifteen straight minutes of only Dane speaking with no time for student processing of this new content. From watching the video, Dane was able to see what his students saw: a teacher talking at them for an extended period of time without ever checking to see if they ever understood the content he was delivering. It was clear to Dane that he was losing his students' attention and engagement during these lengthy demonstration lessons, and that it would not take long for even the best-behaved students to begin exhibiting off-task behaviors during teacher lecture and demonstrations.

Together, we talked through Dane's concern over not knowing if his students understood new content. He crafted the following goal: "Increase use of informal spot checks during demonstration lessons to measure student understanding of new content." The coaches at Greenview High School firmly believe it is critical that the wording of the goal be the teacher's. Dane was really talking about formative assessment practices, but the goal needed to be expressed in words that originated with him, so that he felt greater ownership over the goal and, thus, work in earnest to achieve it. As Dane was employing no checks for understanding, any formative assessment practices that he implemented would improve the quality of his students' experience. In our next meeting, I offered Dane ideas for integrating quick checks for understanding. We discussed think/pair/share, hand signals, and quick writes. As Dane's content is entirely computer-based, he preferred to have student complete the quick writes on Socrative, a web based instructional tool that allows teachers to deliver questions to students throughout a lesson and pause to let students respond by typing in responses using their Google

Chromebooks. The teacher can monitor student responses in real-time and address patterns of misunderstanding before too much time elapses.

When Dane felt entirely comfortable with setting up the online Socrative technology and describing the use of it to his students, we videotaped him once again. During his demonstration of how to create a landscape plan using a computer assisted drafting program, he stopped every couple of minutes to push out a question to students through Socrative. He instructed students to type first before talking. Then, he required them to all turn to a table partner, talk through their responses, and compare answers. Students were engaged throughout the demonstration as Dane showed them how to add trees, shrubs, and grass to their own designs. When students moved to their computers to practice the skills taught in the demonstration, Dane used their formative assessment results to target students who needed more of his individual attention, circulating the room to reach all students who needed him most. Most importantly, Dane reported that his self-efficacy as a teacher improved as a result of working with me as his instructional coach. After reaching his initial goal of increasing use of student participation in demonstration lessons, Dane chose not to engage in a second cycle as other department initiatives and his role as head Boys' Lacrosse coach were pulling his attention; however, when the entire faculty was polled to see if they wanted to engage in a cycle of one-to-one coaching before school started this past August, Dane signed up for another one-to-one cycle and requested me as his coach

Steve is a first-year English teacher. He spent the 2012-2013 school year serving as an instructional assistant as a way to get his foot in the door of Greenview High School. For the 2013-2014 school year, Steve was assigned to teach one section of Junior English. Soon after his first observation from the English department chair, Steve sought my assistance. He reported an unfavorable evaluation with the recommendation from his supervisor that Steve would explore

avenues to improve his instruction. Steve is a soft-spoken, laid-back, highly intelligent man. After the first videotape, it was obvious to me that Steve's issue was most certainly not a strong grasp of content but rather a lack of pedagogical skill to translate this intense love of literature for students. The videotaped lesson showed Steve leading a full-class discussion on the classic Arthur Miller play *Death of a Salesman*. The discussion was stilted and awkward with the same couple of students doing all the talking and the majority of students completely disengaged. Steve was self-deprecating in our discussion of his initial impressions of the first videotape. He articulated what I felt to be true: most of his students were not engaged in discussion, and he wished to better engage them. Thus, Steve's instructional goal became: keep the level of participation high during whole class discussions. In order to better measure progress toward the goal, I encouraged Steve to attach a percentage to the wording of his goal. We agreed upon 80% of students offering at least one meaningful comment during whole class discussions. Steve defined "meaningful" as anything that did not summarize plot, or restate what another student had previously stated but instead offered text-based interpretations.

In our discussions of strategies, I encouraged Steve to pre-plan the questions he asked of his students, beginning with recall and remember questions in order to warm students up, and slowly work his way up to the higher levels of Bloom's Taxonomy with synthesis, analysis, evaluation, and creation questions. Steve agreed that his previous questioning pattern was spontaneous and, therefore, did not allow students scaffolding up to higher order thinking. As the first strategy, I suggested that Steve require students to think, write, pair, and then share with partners and eventually the entire class. We also discussed grouping strategies that would encourage more student talk and would take the pressure off of students to risk talking in front of the whole class when many seemed hesitant to do so. The next videotape revealed an uptick in

student participation, but the 80% target was, unfortunately, not met. Steve and I discussed his comfort with the strategy. He admitted that he was not as confident in presenting the strategy as he could have been when videotaped. We continued meeting and practicing the strategies until he eventually reached his 80% goal. The greatest challenge in working with Steve was his intermittent commitment to the work. At times, he was manically energized and other times, he made excuses to delay our meetings and appeared disillusioned with teaching in general. As a result, the work did not progress as smoothly as it could have. Jim Knight (2014) cites a teacher's need for both autonomy and pressure. The instructional coach must balance these two contradictory ideas. Teachers are knowledge-workers who must be respected to make their own decisions about what works best in their own classrooms; however, without a certain level of pressure, a teacher's already overburdened schedules could push coaching to the bottom of even the most committed teachers' priority list. Coaches must apply some pressure to keep the momentum alive. Like Dane, Steve moved from part-time teaching to full-time teaching responsibilities for the 2014-2015 school year. He also requested that he and I work together on another cycle of one-to-one coaching. We kicked off the process during the summer, and Steve successfully completed a second cycle of one-to-one coaching by the end of the first quarter of this school year.

Roger is a bright, dedicated, and wryly humorous Mathematics teacher with whom I have worked during previous school years on his implementation of flipped video lessons. He has taught for thirteen years, and is always actively seeking out ways to improve his instruction and the overall classroom experience for his students. After his first year of using flipped instruction, he and I developed a student survey to help him gather student feedback that would improve the process for the 2013-2014 school year. Given our previous rapport, it was no surprise that Roger

approached me about working on a cycle of one-to-one coaching. In our initial discussion during the 2013-2014 school year, Roger expressed his frustration over a lack of student engagement during partnered and group work in his Geometry class. His suspicions were confirmed by the first videotape that table partners were not discussing the math problems but were, instead, largely socializing during the time Roger allotted for partner work. Roger was making his way around the room and checking in with each pair. The problem was that when he was with one pair of students, the rest of the students were off-task. Roger wanted to measure on-task behavior during partnered and group activities. He felt as though students had grown too comfortable with their table partners, and, therefore, they socialized instead of taking the checking of problems seriously. In our discussion of strategies, I presented Roger with ideas for different ways to group students. My belief was that if students were not always with their table partner as a default, this would better engage them and possibly lead to more time on-task.

In the second videotaped observation, I was also physically present in Roger's classroom using a seating chart that had student pictures attached to record the data. Measuring time on-task occurred in five-minute intervals. Every five minutes, I visually swept the room to note with a plus for students who were on-task and a minus for those who were not. The checking of math problems happened three different times during the fifty minute period. Each time, students were given ten minutes to partner check problems. The students were paired by Roger distributing pairing cards—a strategy I suggested—instead of using table partners to move students to a different partner for each check. With the variety of partners, student on-task behavior was recorded at 75% of the students. Roger was heartened by the increase in student time on-task. After this first cycle, Roger's wife who is a special education teacher at a different school encountered some medical challenges, and Roger needed to suspend our work together.

We did, however, re-group near the end of this past school year to begin working on his instructional goals for the 2014-2015 school year. Now that Roger felt more confident in techniques for grouping his students, his next goal involved making expectations for group work explicit with students. Roger also agreed to another cycle of one-to-one coaching in the fall of this school year. Clearly more comfortable with the one-to-one process, Roger completed a second cycle during the first quarter.

Rachel, like Roger, has thirteen years of experience. She taught middle school Language Arts for seven years, and then came to Greenview High School six years ago to serve as the reading specialist. Rachel had been out of the classroom for five years, helping to establish and run Greenview's tutoring center, working with teachers on integrating reading strategies into the content areas, and then assuming the responsibilities of instructional coach. As she had been absent from classroom teaching and had never taught at the high school level, Rachel asked early in the year if she could work with me on cycles of one-to-one coaching throughout the school year. Having the language of coaching in common made initial conversations on instruction easy. Rachel is highly intelligent, very well-read on current best instructional practices, and the consummate professional. Her garrulous manner made focusing in on an area of focus challenging, as Rachel firmly believed she needed to work on it all. She had been assigned to teach a class of lower-level Junior English. Under the best of circumstances, this population of students is difficult to engage, and Rachel was already feeling insecure about having been out of the classroom for years. Despite my best efforts, our early meetings quickly took a turn into the curricular, as Rachel was attempting to design engaging units of study. In this regard, she was, in my opinion, highly successful. To say that she thought deeply about curricular design would be putting it mildly. She thought about it all the time.

The first videotape of Rachel's class revealed what she suspected was true prior to taping. Students were disengaged, reluctant to do the work she assigned, and resistant to verbal participation even when directly addressed by Rachel. As difficult as the situation was for her, I asked Rachel to identify one area in which we could focus our efforts and effect a clear change in student behaviors. Rachel spoke of beginning and ending of class routines. She complained about how long it took students to take out the necessary materials at the start of class and how they began packing up near the end of class before she was even finished delivering the lesson. For our first cycle of coaching, Rachel set the goal of establishing clear beginning and ending of class routines to increase student engagement. When watching the first video, we both noted that it took most students as long as five minutes to get the required materials out for that day's lesson. At the end of the video, some students began packing up materials as early as ten minutes before the end of the period. I suggested a checklist strategy for helping students ready themselves for the work of the day. We talked about how long a reasonable time would be for students to complete the checklist of materials and for Rachel and her instructional assistant to collect the checklist. The goal became: "Within one minute of the bell 90% of students will have the required materials on their desks." We scheduled a second videotape to focus our efforts on this start of class routine.

Rachel implemented beginning of class checklists for one week before I videotaped her class again. I came to observe the class in person as well as videotaping. Timing the checklist routine, the data revealed that 80% of students were ready within one minute of the bell. The other 20% were missing materials or were tardy and not ready within the minute. A definite improvement was made as students soon discovered that the checklist routine was the way that they began class every day. Next, we worked on end of class routines. I suggested that Rachel

use an exit slip that students needed to complete with five minutes of class remaining. This would prevent their tendency to pack up their materials early and miss a crucial opportunity to process the day's lesson and any homework Rachel assigned for that night. By initiating beginning and ending of class routines, Rachel sent the message to students that every minute of class time is important. This was the tip of the iceberg for Rachel however. She also worried that students were off-task much of the time during partnered and group work. For our next cycle, we measured on-task versus off-task behavior in group work with the hope of raising the level of engagement. Another coach took the data on this observation as Rachel and I were both teaching the same period during second semester, and I did not want to miss my own class. The data revealed only 60% of students were on-task at any given point in the data collection process. Rachel found this percentage disheartening; we discussed multiple strategies for shorter duration student partnerships, as the groups were often formed at the start of a novel and maintained for the length of the unit. Rachel, subsequently, implemented more and different partnering techniques throughout a class period. My work with Rachel stretched throughout the entire school year.

Jay is a first year teacher in the Social Studies department. He is also a graduate of Greenview High School, and I had the pleasure of coaching him when he was a student on our school's competitive speech team. We kept in touch when Jay went off to college, and when he was searching for a teaching job, I recommended him for an instructional assistant position in the English department. He served one year in this role before assuming full-time teaching responsibilities. To say that Jay possesses a natural talent for teaching would somehow seem a disservice to his incredible work ethic. Jay is gregarious, intellectually curious, and an absolute pleasure to coach. He seeks any and all ideas that will improve his teaching. Our connection is

natural, based upon years of mutual respect, and, therefore, made the work we undertook together seem many times like play instead of work.

Jay was teaching History of World Civilization, a year-long, standard-level freshman course. As with all of my other coaching clients, Jay worried that the dryness of the content made engaging his students a perpetual challenge. He was correct. The first videotape concerned Jay as he felt he was doing the majority of the speaking in class and wanted to find a way to break up the didactic presentation of course content in order to afford students entry points, time for personal reaction, connection, and processing, and a platform for engaging. Jay's initial goal—in fact, it served as his goal for the entire year—became to increase opportunities for student-to-student interaction versus teacher-led direct instruction throughout the period. I worked with Jay on taking his PowerPoint presentations that were flush with content, and finding within them natural stopping points where he could have students respond to questions, make connections, discuss ideas with peers, and offer their own thoughts to the entire class. Jay's progress was easy to measure, and the results revealed what I have come to realize is true: small changes can produce huge, positive results. Every strategy I suggested to Jay, he took, made it his own, and many times improved it. When I suggested the response chaining protocol whereby students acknowledge the previous speaker's idea and then build upon that speaker's idea, the videotape of Jay's students engaged in response chaining could serve as a model for the protocol. When I showed Jay how to use the website Socrative—after learning about it from Dane earlier in the year—Jay immediately implemented it in his own classroom as a formative assessment tool to measure student understanding and to give reluctant students time to process their thoughts in writing before having to share with peers. Jay's willingness to continue with the process through multiple cycles of one-to-one coaching demonstrates the

power of the partnership principle of reciprocity (Knight, 2007). I learned just as much from helping him grow as a teacher as he could ever have possibly learned from me.

Research Findings

In early March of 2014, I drafted and, subsequently, distributed a Google survey to my coaching clients asking them questions about their experiences of working with me as their instructional coach on the one-to-one coaching process (See Appendix C & Appendix D). The ten question survey solicited feedback on their initial reasons for working with a coach, their level of comfort throughout the process of working with a coach, and how likely they would be to work with a coach again in the future. Another section asked participants to rank order the aspects of the coaching process they found most helpful in facilitating their growth. Finally, since all clients' goals related to raising the level of student engagement within the teachers' classes, I sought information that would help me in answering my thesis question: what effect does one-to-one instructional coaching have on a teacher's pedagogical skill to improve student engagement? I was interested solely in teacher perceptions as many people would argue that perception is reality. I desired to know if teachers personally believed this work positively impacted their instructional repertoire and their ability to engage their students better than they were able to do so prior to going through the one-to-one process.

Here is what I discovered: in terms of the relationship with the coach, all teacher participants reported that they felt completely comfortable working with a coach; they all reported that they would be likely to work with a coach again; additionally, they all indicated a high-level of benefit received from engaging in the one-to-one coaching process. These positive responses indicate the importance of the coach as a trusted and supportive colleague, and this feedback serves as a reminder to me and my coaching colleagues to actively nurture strong

relationships throughout the building. Without a solid relationship between coach and client, the chances of teachers seeking the assistance of a coach in the future would remain low. I was heartened both by how comfortable my teacher clients were with me as their coach and by how many of them desired to continue the work in the future with me as their coach. Participants reported various reasons for initially seeking help from a coach. One teacher participant noted, “I was motivated to improve areas of my instruction that I knew could be elevated but that I was not sure of how to make those strides. I felt like working with the one on one coach would allow me to challenge myself and take some risks, all with the benefit of the students in minds.”

Another new teacher participant recognized the prevalence of coaching as a successful growth model in other fields. “First, I'm a new teacher. As with any new activity, I'm not all that great at it yet ... still fumbling my way and learning by trial and error. I recognize that process of improvement needs to occur, but I want to accelerate it as much as possible. And expert advice/coaching seems to be the best way possible. I believe in the effectiveness of coaching in part because it's effective in every other field.” Whatever the initial reason that motivated my participants to seek out the services of a coach, their comments all reveal a pattern of dedicated professionalism and a strong desire to improve their pedagogical skill, thus positively influencing subsequent student outcomes.

In asking teacher participants to rank order the parts of the one-to-one process they found most valuable and those they found least valuable, their rankings were in keeping with what they all relayed to me verbally throughout the process. The majority of participants ranked the initial videotape as the least valuable part of the process. I would argue that their initial level of discomfort watching their own teaching on video negatively influenced their ranking. Many reported that the area of instruction that concerned them the most was evident on the videotape,

and no new information was garnered about this area of initial concern from watching the video. I firmly believe that teachers must have confirmation from the videotape to avoid the coach potentially being perceived as dictatorial and autocratic in suggesting an initial area of focus for the participating teacher. Although video was perceived as initially disquieting, I would argue that it reflects the reality of the classroom experience, and therefore is a critical component of teacher growth. The parts of the process that involve the partnership principles of voice and dialogue received the highest marks. Teachers found goal-setting, discussion of possible instructional strategies, and debriefing post-observation the most useful parts of the process. These findings confirm Knight's belief the real growth takes place in conversation. As Knight says, "Instructional coaches make the world safer for more meaningful communication, one conversation at a time" (2007, p. 79). It is encouraging to see that teacher participants value the richness of the conversations as much as I do, and, as such, assigned the highest rankings to the parts of the coaching process that involve robust, collaborative dialogue between two professionals: teacher and coach.

Ultimately, all teacher participants desired higher levels of student engagement in their classes. I asked them to report on how one-to-one coaching positively affected their ability to impact student engagement during direct instruction, in partnered or group activities, during independent work, and in the overall class. Teachers reported the most positive gains in raising student engagement during partnered, group, and independent work. The lowest gains were found in the area of direct instruction. This is not surprising given the fact that extended periods of direct instruction were identified as the area of greatest concern by most teachers in my study; furthermore, my suggestions for instructional strategies always attempted to break up direct instruction into greater incidences of independent, partner, and group processing of content

instead of lengthy, uninterrupted periods of teacher-focused, direct instruction. The results reveal that teacher participants all perceived a direct correlation between the integration of varied instructional strategies and increased levels of student engagement in their classrooms.

Finally, I asked teacher participants an open-ended question about how they thought the process of one-to-one instructional coaching could be improved in the future at Greenview High School. Most participants offered no suggestions for improving the process, but rather expressed gratitude that Greenview had this individualized level of support in place for them. As one teacher said, “All of my discussions with Mark were so enlightening, and I always felt like I had come up with the ideas myself.” Many teachers expressed a desire for greater accountability. This was interesting in light of the fact that every meeting I held with a teacher ended with a plan, time, and date for the next meeting. Some teachers, however, would cancel, reschedule, or forget our meetings. Their desire for greater accountability speaks to the balancing act Knight (2014) believes coaches must make between pressuring the teacher to continue in the process and respecting that individual teacher’s professional autonomy. One teacher expressed a desire to work in a team with a coach and at least one teacher or a team of teachers who teach the same course. Lesson study—where all teachers who teach the same content come together to work on instructional methods—offers an exciting opportunity for the expansion of the instructional coaching program; however, this is different work than one teacher working with one coach and would not fall under the auspices of one-to-one coaching. Knight (2014) asserts that the most effective form of professional development should never be a ‘one size fits all’ approach, but rather it should always be tailored to each teacher’s individual needs. Overall, the survey was validating that the process of one-to-one coaching is clearly benefitting those teachers open to participating in the process. With an eye toward the future, four out of the five teachers with

whom I worked on this study committed to and completed another cycle of one-to-one coaching during the first quarter of the 2014-2015 school year.

Conclusions & Recommendations

Professionals, regardless of their chosen profession, are those individuals who commit to continuous learning throughout the span of their career. Peter Senge (as cited in O’Neil, 1995), author and organizational expert, argues that any organization’s ability to learn and grow will secure its fate as either healthy and functional or dysfunctional and doomed to failure. As Senge notes, “A learning organization is an organization in which people at all levels are, collectively, continually enhancing their capacity to create things they really want to create.” Teachers, being professionals, should have the power over their own learning, self-selecting how they learn and what they learn provided that their goals align to those of the learning organization in which they are employed. In my work as an instructional coach with teacher participants, I have found that all teacher-selected goals were in keeping with the goals of the larger organization. Senge (as cited in O’Neil, 1995) believes that schools need to create the conditions whereby teachers can continually reflect on their teaching. “Learning is always an on-the-job phenomenon. Learning always occurs in a context where you are taking action.” Continual learning is non-negotiable for all members of the school community—teachers and students and administrators alike; the path, however, should be differentiated and tailored to the needs of the individual. Instructional coaches serve as a vital support, respecting a teacher’s professionalism, while applying the appropriate amount of pressure to keep teachers focused on attaining self-selected, student-measurable goals that aim at improving student outcomes.

Schools are fast recognizing the lifeline that job-embedded coaches provide to their teachers. By re-assigning veteran teachers to coaching roles, school administrations validate and

formalize the mentoring of new teaching talent by their more experienced peers; in doing so, these schools secure the future of their teaching force rather than falling prey to consistently high national teacher attrition rates. We are living in a time when teachers are under the microscope more than any other time in history. With the rise of intense standardization for both students and their teachers alike, it becomes ever more critical that schools respond by offering teachers greater support to become effective at teaching the diverse student population who currently enter their classes. Educational researcher and author of the new book *Building a Better Teacher* Elizabeth Green (2014) asserts that teaching may well be the most challenging of all professions. Doctors see one patient at a time; teachers see upwards of thirty, all with differing needs. Green's premise that great teachers are made and not born demystifies the public perception that teachers either have natural talent for teaching, or they should exit or be removed from the profession. Instead, Green posits that effective teaching is a matter of developing a set of skills that can and should be taught (Green, 2014). As an instructional coach, I have been fortunate enough to contribute to the growth of many teachers across different content areas in my high school. Additionally, I have been coached for the last two years via Google Hangout with Dr. Martha Elford of the Kansas Coaching Group. She has coached my coaching, so that I can continue to improve my skills in order to better serve my current and future teacher clients. Instructional coaches help to develop and support better teaching that better engage students, creating the conditions whereby teachers can feel respected and celebrated for the difficult work they undertake daily.

References

- Adams, S. (2013, Oct. 6). Strips. Dilbert by Scott Adams. Retrieved from <http://www.dilbert.com/strips/comic/2013-10-06/>
- Best high schools (2014, April 22). *U.S. News and World Report*. Retrieved from <http://www.usnews.com>
- Bidwell, A. (2014, April 9). Most teachers are not engaged in their jobs, Gallup finds. *U.S. News and World Report*. Retrieved from <http://www.usnews.com/education/best-high-schools>
- Carlson, C. (2013, June 9). Teacher pay now tied to test scores. *Post Tribune*. Retrieved from posttrib.suntimes.com.
- Darling-Hammond, L., Chung Wei, R., Andree, A., Richardson, N., & Orphanos, S. (2009). Professional learning in the learning profession: A status report on teacher development in the United States and abroad. National Staff Development Council, 1-36.
- DeMonte, J. (2013). High-quality professional development for teachers: supporting teacher training to improve student learning. Center for American Progress, 1-24.
- Gerzon, R. (2014). Socrates: the unexamined life is not worth living. Conscious Earth. Retrieved from www.consciousearth.us.
- Gawande, A. (2011). Personal best. *The New Yorker*. Retrieved from <http://www.newyorker.com>
- Green, E. (2014). *Building a better teacher: How teaching works (and how to teach it to everyone)*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc.
- Gulamhussein, A. (2013). Teaching the teachers: effective professional development in an era of high stakes accountability. Center for Public Education. Retrieved from <http://www.centerforpubliceducation.org>

- Harper, D. (2014). Coach. Online Etymology Dictionary. Retrieved from <http://www.etymonline.com>
- Hefling, K. (2012, March 15). Teacher pension funds largely underfunded, study says. *The Huffington Post*. Retrieved from <http://www.huffingtonpost.com>
- Illinois school report card (2013). Retrieved from <http://www.isbe.net>.
- Ingersoll, R. M. (2012). Beginning teacher induction: What the data tells us. *Education Week*, 31 (31).
- Knight, J. (2007). *Instructional coaching: A partnership approach to improving instruction*. Thousand Oaks: Corwin Press.
- Knight, J. (2009). Coaching. *National Staff Development Council*, 30 (1), 18-22.
- Knight, J. (2014). *Focus on teaching: Using video for high-impaction instruction*. Thousand Oaks: Corwin Press.
- Knight, J. (2013). *High impact instruction: A framework for great teaching*. Thousand Oaks: Corwin Press.
- Labaree, D. (2011). Targeting teachers. *Dissent*, 58 (3), 9-14.
- O'Neil, J. (1995). On schools as learning organizations: A conversation with Peter Senge. *Educational Leadership*, 52 (7), 20-23.
- Protheroe, N. (2008). Teacher efficacy: What is it and does it matter? *Principal*, 87 (5), 42-45.
- Riggs, L. (2013). Why do teachers quit? *The Atlantic*. Retrieved from theatlantic.com.
- White, J. (2014). California teacher tenure, firing laws ruled unconstitutional. *The Sacramento Bee*. Retrieved from sacbee.com.

Wolters, A. & Daugherty, S. (2007). Goal structures and teachers' sense of efficacy: Their relation and association to teaching experience and academic level. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 99 (1), 181-193.

Yoon, K.S., Duncan, T., Wen-Yu Lee, S., Scarloss, B., & Shapley, K. L. (2007). Reviewing the evidence on how teacher professional development affects student achievement. National Center for Educational Evaluation and Regional Assistance (33), 1-62.

Appendix A



The Partnership Principles



Equality—All thoughts and beliefs are valued. No one's view is more important than anyone else's.



Choice—One individual does not make decisions for another. Teachers have a great deal of choice in what and how they learn.



Voice—Both teacher and coach have opportunities to express their points of view. Teachers are free to openly share their opinions of content being learned.



Dialogue—Partners speak their minds. Teachers and coaches talk freely and listen authentically. Both benefit.



Reflection—Teachers are free to choose or reject ideas after reflection.



Praxis—Meaning arises when people focus on how to implement theory into practice.



Reciprocity—All benefit from the success, learning, & experiences of others.

--adapted from *Instructional Coaching: A Partnership Approach to Improving Instruction*
by Jim Knight (2007)

Appendix B

Steps in the One-to-One Coaching Cycle

Teacher:		Coach:	
-----------------	--	---------------	--

Cycle Step	Date	Notes
Enrollment		Voluntary: Interviews, small/large group meetings, presentations
Initial Meeting		During the first couple weeks of any quarter.
Video with Observation		Coach observes in classroom that is being recorded. Teacher watches video privately.
Goal Setting Meeting		Student-focused measurable goal. Short term, attainable. Meeting to take place within one week of first observation.
Initial Strategy Session		Menu of options available to address teacher's goal is provided to teacher. Coach provides research of strategies to attend to teacher's goal.
Initial Instructional Strategy Selected		Initial strategy selected to affect the sought-after change in goal. This probably takes place in another meeting between teacher and coach.
Strategy is modeled		Coach arranges modeling through 1:1, video, in class w/ or w/o students. This could take place in the strategy selection meeting or shortly thereafter.
Strategy is employed		Teacher employs strategy—repeatedly.
2nd Coaches Observation with Video		With a selected strategy in place, teacher is observed and recorded.
Explore effect of strategy on goal with coach		Making quantitative analysis from 1st and 2nd observations. This can be done by teacher and/or coach
Reflect		As a result of the work, teacher decides whether to refine goal, or wrap-up process.

Teacher Reflection of One-to-One Cycle

Fill out the table below to help you reflect on your experience.

Start Date (approximate)	
Coach I worked with:	
Initial area of focus:	
Goal selected after initial observation. (measurable student-focused goal)	
Thoughts from initial measurement.	
Strategies discussed and one chosen to implement.	
Thoughts on implementation. (e.g. difficult at first but became easier..., worked right away..., never really seemed to be authentic...)	
Measurable results from second observation. (e.g. student response went up 14%, encouraging to corrective language improved to 3:1, off-task behavior dropped by 31%)	
Concluding thoughts about the effect of the new strategy in your classroom.	

6. How has the process of one-to-one coaching impacted your ability to raise the level of student engagement during partnered or group activities?

	0	1	2	3	4	5	
Not at all							Very much

7. How has the process of one-to-one coaching impacted your ability to raise the level of student engagement during independent work?

	0	1	2	3	4	5	
Not at all							Very much

8. How has the process of one-to-one coaching impacted your ability to raise the OVERALL level of student engagement in your class?

	0	1	2	3	4	5	
Not at all							Very much

9. Once this current one-to-one process is complete, how likely would you be to work with a coach again on a different instructional goal?

	0	1	2	3	4	5	
Not at all likely							Highly likely

10. What recommendations do you have for improving the one-to-one coaching process?

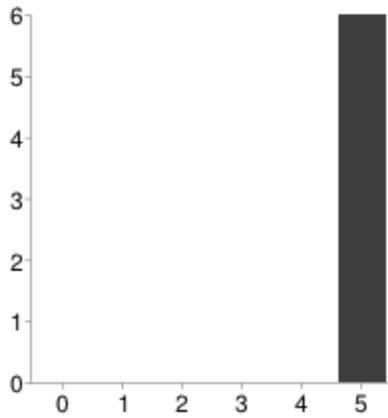
Appendix D

Survey Results

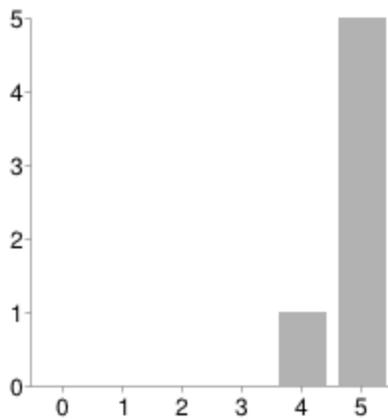
1. What motivated you to work with an instructional coach?

I was motivated to improve areas of my instruction that I knew could be elevated but that I was not sure of how to make those strides. I felt like working with the one on one coach would allow me to challenge myself and take some risks, all with the benefit of the students in mind. I also felt that working with the one on one coach I would be able to access new technology to use in class. Finally, I was motivated to work with the one on one coach because it would create an ongoing conversation about my craft that could be continued over the period of many goals. First, I'm a new teacher. As with any new activity, I'm not all that great at it yet ... still fumbling my way and learning by trial and error. I recognize that process of improvement needs to occur, but I want to accelerate it as much as possible. And expert advice/coaching seems to be the best way possible. I believe in the effectiveness of coaching in part because it's effective in every other field. But I think it is especially valuable in classroom teaching, because the job is very much a performance. And the best way to improve a performance is to see it from the audience's perspective, not the performer's. I've learned that through the hundreds of hours I have spent observing other teachers, and I very much value the opportunity to have myself observed frequently (and by someone who is not a supervisor). -Increase student engagement -Learn techniques to help students persevere in difficult math problems -How to use flip videos effectively During the new-teacher orientation I saw the presentation given by the instructional coaches. It seemed like a great resource to utilize. I then met an instructional coach (Mark) through a curriculum project myself and a colleague had been working on over the summer. This made me comfortable and prompted me to come back for 1 to 1 coaching. I value their experiences, knowledge capital, and expertise. I wanted to improve my teaching, I wanted to try new things I had heard about in teaching. I enjoy and benefit from collaborating with colleagues.

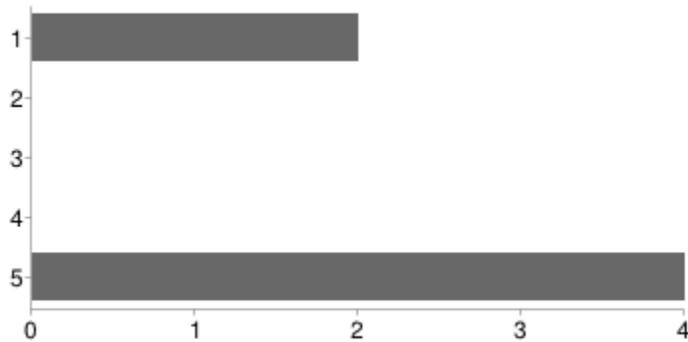
2. How comfortable have you felt working with an instructional coach?



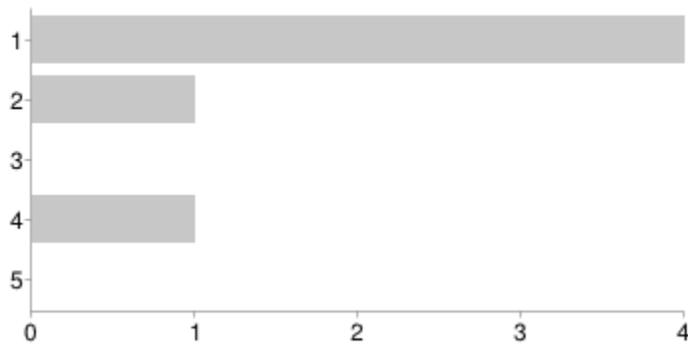
3. What level of benefit, if any, did you experience from working with an instructional coach?



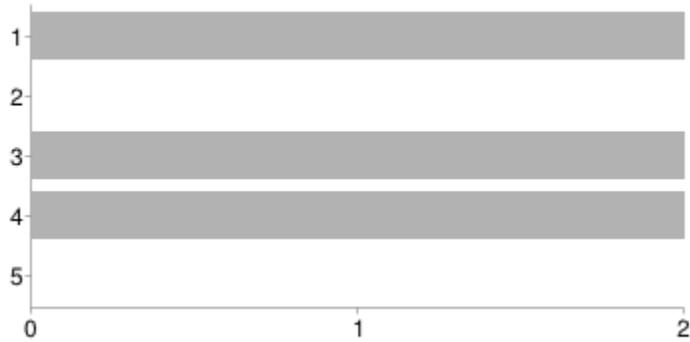
Initial videotape of class [4. Please rank order aspects of the one-to-one coaching process from most valuable (1) up to least valuable (5).]



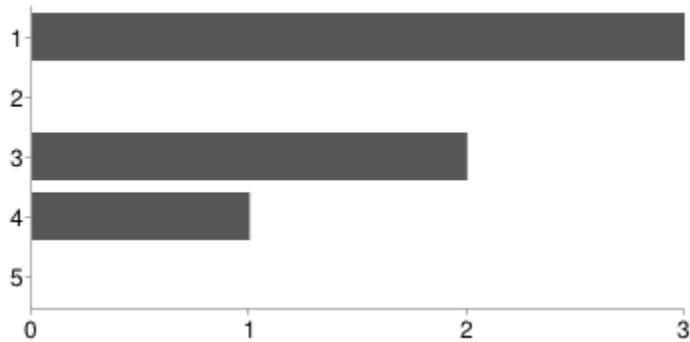
Goal setting process including student measurable outcome [4. Please rank order aspects of the one-to-one coaching process from most valuable (1) up to least valuable (5).]



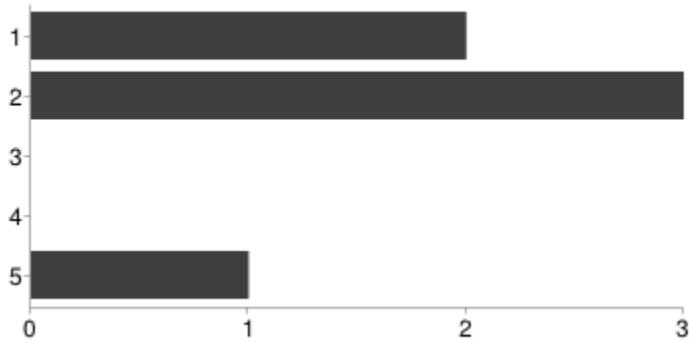
Data collection (video/in-class observation) [4. Please rank order aspects of the one-to-one coaching process from most valuable (1) up to least valuable (5).]



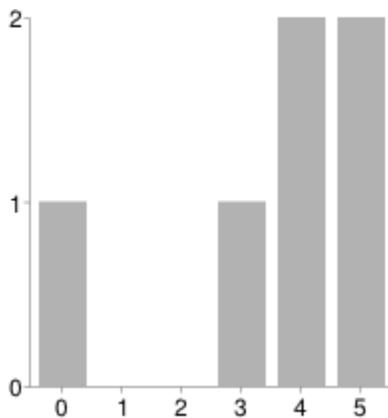
Debrief meeting with coach [4. Please rank order aspects of the one-to-one coaching process from most valuable (1) up to least valuable (5).]



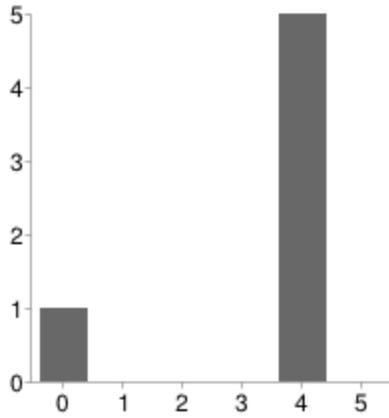
Discussion with coach on instructional strategies [4. Please rank order aspects of the one-to-one coaching process from most valuable (1) up to least valuable (5).]



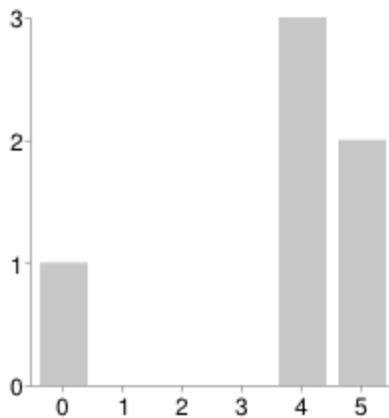
5. How has the process of one-to-one coaching impacted your ability to raise the level of student engagement during direct instruction?



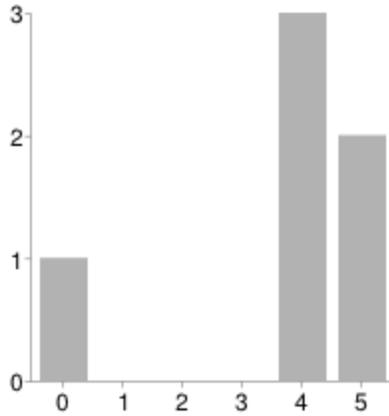
6. How has the process of one-to-one coaching impacted your ability to raise the level of student engagement during partnered or group activities?



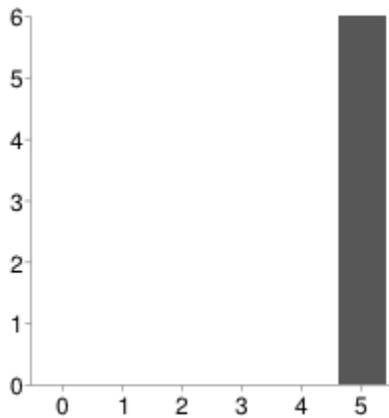
7. How has the process of one-to-one coaching impacted your ability to raise the level of student engagement during independent work?



8. How has the process of one-to-one coaching impacted your ability to raise the OVERALL level of student engagement in your class?



9. Once this current one-to-one process is complete, how likely would you be to work with a coach again on a different instructional goal?



10. What recommendations do you have for improving the one-to-one coaching process?

I have no recommendations at this time, the entire process has been enjoyable. It is great to know we offer this kind of support at GBS. None In my opinion, once someone has sought out the help of an instructional coach, the coach and "client" should map out a plan for meetings, follow up, etc. This way, the client is held accountable to the plan. Possibly work with another teacher on the same content team and one coach. A consistent weekly meeting would help me stay focused on the process. All of my discussions with Mark were so enlightening, and I always felt like I had come up with the ideas myself. It was very helpful that he had observed my class and knew the students we were talking about.

Permission Letter

Dear Colleague,

As you may or may not know, I am currently a graduate student in the Leadership in Technology and The Arts program at Bank Street College of Education in New York. I am beginning the process of conducting research for my Master's thesis. The ultimate goal of this project is to deepen my knowledge of instructional best practices and coaching protocols in order to better serve the students and teachers with whom I work. My thesis will focus on the effects of one-to-one coaching on teacher instructional practices and student engagement.

I am seeking your permission to use ideas discussed during our one-to-one coaching sessions. Any feedback you provide on the process would be invaluable. Please note that the feedback you share will be included in the thesis; however, your name and the name of our school will be changed to protect your privacy. Also note that my Master's thesis will be shared as a PDF with the Bank Street College community in a password-protected searchable database and may also be submitted as a PDF to the Bank Street College Library where it will be catalogued as part of the library collection and entered into an international database for wider circulation.

Please sign on the line below to indicate that you either grant or deny permission for the information you provide to be used for the purpose of this research study and thesis. Thank you for sharing your insights with me regardless of whether or not you consent to my use of ideas from our coaching work together.

Sincerely,



Mark Maranto

.....
 I agree to participate in this study.

Name of Participant (please print): _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

I would prefer NOT to participate in this study.