Making the Case for Instructional Coaching

- Overlake School located in Redmond, Washington
  - Gerald Buhaly – Upper School Head
  - Jessica Hanson – Instructional Coach
  - Matt Horvat – Head of School
Making the Case for Instructional Coaching

- Problem & Solution
- Process
- Practice
Quality of Teaching at Independent Schools

- Teacher quality is central to schools’ mission
- Assumption of students and families -> Faculty are highly capable and expert at what they do
- How do schools know and ensure this?
Faculty Evaluations

• Faculty evaluation process
  – Asks divisional heads/academic deans to evaluate a large number of faculty
  – Observations are usually limited and pre-arranged
  – Evaluation usually tied to contract and salary
  – Process is not centered on consistent meaningful feedback
Professional Development (PD)

• Goal of most PD - improve classroom instruction

• Context for PD
  – Roughly $100M is spent annually by independent schools on PD
  – Research indicates less than 25% of teachers change practice after PD
  – Further less than 20% change practice when PD is done in a group

• Significant resources used - little impact on teaching and learning
Solution -> Coaching

• Bring PD to the classroom
  – Ongoing consistent feedback that is focused on teacher growth
  – Not related to evaluation or job security
  – Done by a “coach”
Why Coaching?

• Atul Gawande’s article in the *The New Yorker*

• Jim Knight at University of Kansas – Kansas Coaching Project

• Used in the for-profit world

• Makes sense
Wish List for Coach

- Veteran teacher
- Administrative experience working with faculty
- Clear understanding of and passion for teaching and learning
- Open and welcoming personality
- Able to engage in dialogue about teaching and learning
Guidelines established for Instructional Coach (IC)

• IC reports to US and MS Heads
• First quarter of first year - no coaching
• Coaching cohort lasts one quarter
• Coach has no evaluative role
• Faculty in evaluation year do not work with IC
• Limited number of faculty each quarter
• Volunteers start first!
Adjustments/Questions since Year 1

- IC works with all new faculty at start of year
- Teachers identified in difficulty are referred to the IC for optional support
- Approximately 2 ½ years worked with all faculty
- How to engage with the non-volunteer teachers?
“The ultimate aim of each of these stances and their cumulative effect is to support continuous learning on the part of the teachers and to enhance their capacity to engage in productive collegial relationships.”

From Lipton and Wellman
Learning-Focused Supervision
What Coaching Looks Like
How Coaching Sounds

• Teachers do the majority of the talking

• Coach helps clarify ideas and action plans – fosters thinking in the teacher

• Coach asks genuine questions from a position of compassion and inquiry
Try Coaching

Observational Data

- Teacher appears unprepared for class
- Teacher asks class for a few minutes to get organized once class has begun
- No agenda for the day posted
- Students ask repeatedly for clarification of lesson purpose and directions
- While students are waiting for teacher to respond to questions, they begin to talk amongst themselves about non-class topics
- Lesson flow is disrupted as teacher needs to repeatedly update instructions and redirect students
- Students become frustrated due to multiple false starts

How would you begin a conversation with this teacher? What questions would you ask?
Questions?
Bibliography
