



Video coaching puts a new lens on learning

BY VALERIE MINOR AND SUZANNE MCGAHEY

An effective teacher is the No. 1 factor determining a student's achievement and growth (Marzano, 2003), and in the Keller (Texas) Independent School District, we wanted to help grow the capacity of our teachers to maximize the growth of our students. Over the past year, we've had success in using video to provide personalized professional learning to

teachers across the career continuum, from new teachers to veteran teachers looking to improve their practice.

Our decision to use video-based professional learning and coaching has transformed how teachers in our district view professional learning. It is allowing our teachers to set goals, reflect, and improve on exactly what they need at that moment. It is also allowing coaches to "see" inside classrooms more often

and with less intrusion on the students and giving all teachers a window into each other's classrooms without having to leave their own.

DEVELOPING REFLECTIVE TEACHER LEADERS

Our use of video began when we set out to support the growth of teachers who want to become leaders within their classrooms, rather than pursuing

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— Donna McDaniel, a biology teacher at Keller (Texas) High School

administration careers. We envisioned creating an ever-growing network of excellent teachers willing to engage in a transparent process of continuous improvement by allowing others into their classroom, listening to feedback, and reflecting on their craft.

Out of this desire was born the professional learning program known as LADDER (leadership, achievement, discovery, determination, empowerment, and reflection). Teachers apply and interview to be selected for the program. They must demonstrate the desire to reflect, learn, and improve their practice, including a recommendation from their principal to show they are an ongoing learner and a positive leader on their campus. In 2020-21, there are 40 teachers participating in two cohorts.

The program began in the 2019-20 school year with a cohort of 15 teachers. After their first year, those 15 teachers opted to go through a second year. Because of the first group’s experience, we were able to recruit 25 additional teachers in 2020-21.

Participating teachers set personal goals, visit each other’s classrooms to capture and share measurable data that will help their peers reach their goals, and video record their lessons for self-reflection and peer evaluation. Seeing themselves on video helps teachers observe and reflect on their practices and helps motivate them to improve. Professional learning that will stick with our teachers needs to be relevant to them, take in their professional

experience and knowledge, and be ongoing and personalized. Video-based learning fit right into these needs.

Because the video is a central component, we quickly realized that we needed a platform in which to house the videos and the dialogue between the teachers. We implemented the video-based professional learning platform from Edthena to help meet this need.

Teachers upload videos that showcase the specific problem of practice they are working toward and receive specific feedback from colleagues in their cohort and coaches to assist with the growth and development of this problem of practice. Problems of practice include: building stronger relationships to increase student achievement, improving critical thinking through inquiry-based activities in the classroom, and student ownership of learning using tools and resources the teacher puts in place in the classroom.

While the prospect of recording a lesson, watching yourself, and then opening up your classroom for peer critique was the one factor all of the participants feared, it ended up contributing enormously to their growth. Teachers even requested to add more recording sessions to the program and agenda.

Donna McDaniel, a biology teacher at Keller High School, said, “If you are brave enough to accept the challenge, take a look at yourself, literally, and record yourself teaching, you’ll be amazed at what you think you

are doing during a lesson versus what you are really doing during a lesson. But I promise the reward, the growth, and the professional and personal development are so worth the risk.” This was a common theme that we heard over and over again.

EXPANDING THE USE OF VIDEO

Based on our success using video coaching, we decided to use a similar approach with our new teacher induction program. In the 2020-21 school year, first-year teachers use the Edthena platform to record videos for video coaching and reflection. This allows those who support the first-year teachers to gauge the needs and strengths in first-year teacher classrooms, which in turn allows us to adjust the support we provide these teachers.

To guide the professional learning and coaching of first-year teachers through the video coaching process, we are using resources and guidance from *Video in Teacher Learning: Through Their Own Eyes* by Laura Baecher (2019). One such resource is the continuum of teacher learning in video analysis. We are assisting teachers through the development of learning how to look at teaching and learning, how to look at specific practices, what their students look like when learning, and what it looks like when they are accomplishing something in relation to a set of criteria (Baecher, 2019).

Teachers will upload their videos, reflect on what they see, then receive

feedback from a coach and engage in a coaching conversation. From there, the first-year teachers take that feedback and work with the coach to create a commitment within the platform on what their next steps will be. Teachers will continue to reflect on and improve their practice as the year progresses. This reflection practice is a tool that will continue to assist teachers in their career development.

As an incentive to participate in the video coaching experience, first-year teachers earn points for opting to record setting up a lesson, checking for understanding, or closing a lesson. Teachers can also earn extra points for reflecting on video about their experience and growth so far, sharing a video with their entire cohort of grade-level first-year teachers, or providing feedback on a colleague's video.

As we watch the videos and provide feedback to first-year teachers, they have the opportunity to reflect on what they see as well. Through this, they can make commitments for growth and improvement through the process. As teachers compile points, they can earn extra duty pay as an additional incentive. Because this is a new initiative and it can be a bit scary for new teachers to record themselves, we found that incentivizing participation allows for choice on participation and motivation to participate.

As part of the induction program, in pre-COVID years, first-year teachers visited experienced teacher classrooms. Because that was not an option this year, we began using the Organization Video Library portion of the Edthena platform. Mentor and participating teachers contribute videos they have recorded in their classrooms for our first-year teachers to watch. These videos demonstrate effective and engaging teaching strategies and act as a mentor text for first-year teachers with exemplar teaching practices at their fingertips.

Because this was such a huge success and useful tool for first-year teachers, we have since opened up this video library to the entire district. Teachers

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across the district can contribute videos of exemplar teaching strategies and watch videos from other teachers. This has proven to be an invaluable tool, especially as many teachers are navigating uncharted waters with remote and hybrid learning environments.

Through this experience with video coaching and reflection, it is our hope that all first-year teachers will experience the same growth and positive development in their own practice as teachers participating in the LADDER program have experienced. We are monitoring student test results and benchmark data to assess the impact on student learning outcomes.

TIPS FOR SUCCESS

Our experience with both new and veteran teachers has taught us valuable lessons about using video in school contexts.

Start small. When moving to video-based professional learning and coaching, consider starting with a small group or cohort who would embrace stepping out of their comfort zone to try something new. This is an important first step in changing the culture in a district. Keller ISD is working through this culture shift. Participating teachers have fully embraced the cognitive dissonance they experience when watching themselves and reflecting on video and are beginning to spread that to others. We hope to eventually expand this shift to the entire district.

Choose the right tools. Find the right technology to support your district's goals and initiatives. Does the

cost fit your budget? Do the customer service and support meet your needs? Is the platform user-friendly and easy for teachers to record and watch their videos? We wanted a provider that could help us develop plans and goals as well as a technology that was intuitive and wouldn't add complicated steps to this process, which we felt might deter teachers from participating.

Make time and space for learning. When engaging in video-based professional learning, teachers will need the time and opportunities to reflect, provide feedback to each other, and receive valuable feedback that is relevant to their needs. This time needs to be built into the schedule.

Give teachers choice and voice. This process must be driven by teachers' needs and desires. Allow teachers to set their own goals and choose which videos of their teaching practice they upload and share. Ensure coaches understand the feedback teachers are looking for and provide relevant feedback to them in a timely manner. This will encourage teacher engagement, buy-in, and commitment.

With these pieces in place, participating teachers in our district have demonstrated personal and professional growth. Incorporating video into coaching is one of the best ways we've found to provide our teachers with on-time, relevant, and personalized professional learning.

REFERENCES

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