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'I look for opportunities to help'

Q How do you overcome resistance when teachers have been assigned involuntarily to be coached?

The whole stigma (of my job) is, "Oh, the state lady is coming in," so I really practice servant leadership.

First, I go into the school and observe. I make sure they know, "I'm not here to evaluate you. I'm here to support you." I also do a needs assessment. I ask, "What areas would you like more professional learning in?" That's a powerful piece because many of them say, "Nobody ever took the time to ask us what we needed."

I look for opportunities to actually physically serve them before I do anything like model. There was an instance where a teacher was pulled into an unscheduled meeting with a parent and she had things she needed to copy, but she

couldn't do it. I copied it. Simple things like that — look for opportunities to help them out.

I do walkthroughs every day in every class, so I go and take mental notes of what they're teaching and go back and find resources, whether it's Internet resources or something in my professional library, a book I can lend them. "I'm showing you that I'm here to support you."

After I have modeled a strategy and the teacher is observing me, next we plan for our co-teaching together — what we want the lesson to look like and how we want to divvy it up. And we'll fix it up so it's equal. It's showing them that, "I'm not just throwing it on you. I modeled it. Now we're going to do it together. We're going to make sure it's equal. And then you'll do it, and I'll give you some feedback and observe." And that has truly worked. ♦

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