

Coach creates a bond



Q How do you, as a young, new coach, approach veteran teachers?

The Number 1 thing is creating a bond with the teacher. It's creating a subtle emotional connection that fosters trust and leads to open collaboration.

I do an interview — it's all about listening and finding out a few vital questions. "Do you have any professional goals beyond teaching in the classroom?" "Where do you see yourself in 10 to 15 years?" People enjoy talking about their lives and the possibilities for their futures. That gives me insight into their approach to their classrooms. And then it's finding out about their class-

es this year, their challenges, their students' strengths, how (that teacher) learns best. It's research for myself. I want to know how to interact with them, present them information, and get information from them.

Be honest and upfront: "I'm really excited about this position. I know these are the roles and responsibilities for me. I hope that you're going to be cool with the whole observation piece." And be very clear that it's a nonjudgmental position, that you're there for all the teachers, to accomplish a common goal: students' success.

A coach has to have the personality to get information across in a friendly, nonthreatening way. It's sharing strategies and creating relationships and bonds with all the teachers. ♦

Paul Devoto with a poster saying "You are who you choose to be." He is a math teacher and first-year math coach at Jonas Salk High-Tech Academy in the San Juan Unified School District in Carmichael, Calif. You can contact him at paul.devoto@sanjuan.edu.

by Joellen Killion and Cindy Harrison

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