



Mark Vitella is a literacy/numeracy support teacher for three K-8th-grade schools within the Greater Essex County District School Board in Ontario, Canada. You can contact him at mark.vitella@gecdsb.on.ca.

Mentors help shape his coaching

Q As a relatively new coach, how did you figure out how to do this work?

For myself, we have a group of 20 or so coaches for our school board and through the mentorship of these experienced coaches, facilitators, and principals, I've shaped what my role would be like. We've had professional development around the roles of a coach from NSDC. I'm still a learner. The best way to benefit my teachers and my schools is to learn as much as I can. It involves a lot of professional reading, a lot of mentoring from other coaches. I learn from my teachers, as well. We all learn together.

Three to four days before my visit to a school, I send an e-mail and request appointments for support. I have a menu of items I'd like to focus on. Teachers reply with periods they are available and topic requests, and we then will plan out a model lesson and strategies. In a typi-

cal planning session, we sit down with ministry documents and recommended instructional strategies to plan out a lesson or a unit. I just found that e-mailing ahead works for me.

When I partner with a teacher, we agree, "Watch me, observe me, take notes, let me know what you felt worked, what didn't work." Then we'll work together on something. Then the teacher shows what he or she has gathered from the instructional strategy. When we're partnering, it's an activity in shared leadership.

A large part of leadership is being in a partnership with administrators and teachers. I communicate with administrators, look at school rules and how to work with teachers to be precise with our strategies, work with teachers looking at best practices, play a part in making sure our professional learning communities are student-centered and are based on data, and help with group problem solving. I find the experts in each area and pair those who can help each other out. ♦

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