



Marie Parker-McElroy is a cluster-based coach at Graham Road Elementary School in Fairfax County, Va. You can contact her at EMParkerMcE@fcps.edu.

We become a teacher's inner voice

Q How should the coach enhance teachers' ability to become leaders themselves?

Instructional coaches are constantly trying to work themselves out of a job. We build capacity in each teacher so that they don't need us anymore. We are giving them skills to be reflective on their practices so that it becomes automatic for them to reflect on their lessons, data, and the curriculum. They need to be constantly in a cycle of learning to make sure lessons are appropriate for their students. Eventually, the instructional coach doesn't need to be there because our little voices are stuck in their heads as they're planning a lesson: 'What modalities should I teach to? What does the child need to know before I teach this? What are the prerequisites?' Those questions become their inner thoughts.

One way is to accomplish this is to use protocols regularly in every meeting. Another way is to ask the same questions and to keep going to that learning cycle in our team meetings and our con-

versations when we work with teachers individually and in groups. We use different protocols and are aware of teachers' individual needs. A coach's most important skill is understanding the power of listening and being present in the moment so that other adults feel appreciated and that someone understands where they're coming from. As a facilitator, I make sure everybody is active, that I don't have somebody talking the whole time and somebody who never opens her mouth.

Just as teachers gradually release responsibility to students, as an instructional coach, I gradually release responsibility to teacher leaders. At first they see me modeling, then I release a little bit to them. Then they start taking over the roles, such as analyzing data or unpacking a standard with their team, with safety nets of me supporting them and giving them feedback as part of the team. Later, we might have a reflective conversation to build their capacity as teacher leaders. That, of course, goes back to listening, facilitation skills, and the cycle and protocols to build teacher leaders. That's how we build capacity. ♦



**NSDC'S SUMMER
CONFERENCE SAMPLER**

Expand your learning

View keynote addresses and breakout sessions from NSDC's 2009 Summer Conference in Boston for just \$99.

For more information, visit;
www.nsd.org/elearning/summer09sampler

nsdc

800-727-7288
www.nsd.org