



For technology coach, knowing when to step back is key

As told to Valerie von Frank

As a technology resource teacher, I had to learn when to step back and let teachers make their own mistakes or recognize their mistakes. I often felt it was my job to go in and save them. It's not always the coach's job to do that.

Good coaching is knowing when to push them — are teachers in their zone of proximal growth, or is it something that's way above them and I need to go in and give them support rather than talking to them over the phone? It's knowing when to step in.

In my first few years, I shared an office, and every time the phone rang and I would run out the door, the other person in the office would say, "Oh, there goes Superman! He has his cape on and he's going to save somebody else!" I think at the beginning, I wasn't recognizing where the teachers were in their own learning and I would just go

where I was called to go.

Now, I've gotten to know the teachers better. I taught at a different school before coming here and had to learn a whole new staff. It took a while to get to know the personalities. Now I know that this person won't be upset if she has to wait 15 minutes and another one might say, "Oh, you have to come right now" and need immediate attention. Understanding my role as a coach has helped me realize sometimes it's okay to let people struggle a little.

Teachers also had to learn about my role. I am here for instructional support with the technology, not to fix the technology. At first, we tried different analogies to explain the role. We put together a list of sample questions you would ask your technology resource teacher and things you wouldn't ask the TRT to do. Recently, we started an online database that showed different drop-down options and it fills in the name of the person to call for help in that area.

I also have found it's important to attend leadership team meetings to get a calendar and a heads-up so I can plan as much in advance as possible to meet teachers' needs. I can see which issues may come up and when, and then plan ways to work with teachers to help them when they're trying something new.

And, of course, I'm constantly invested in my own learning. I have to be a lifelong learner. That's the push of the job. We have to help teachers make classrooms better for the kids — that's what it's all about.

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