



Meet needs of individual teachers with differentiated coaching

I've worked in three schools in the coach's role over the last eight years. I helped open my current school, where I work with about two dozen teachers.

It's important to get to know the teachers and how they approach their students. I start out working with people who are excited and interested in being coached, and then word of mouth helps spread the practice. People start saying, "Why is she working in your room? I want her in my room, too."

It's important to build trust. I had to build up trust by offering to teach a whole group lesson, to help the teachers. That helped them trust me — when they were able to watch me. I had to prove myself, prove that I knew what I was doing and was willing to find resources that would help them. It was good for me and for the teachers to begin with more whole-group professional development, too.

Grade-level teams have instructional practices they want to work on, so I plan lessons with them and then slide into coaching. The principal and I also looked at the data and identified a high-needs grade. Every day I modeled lessons or co-taught with a teacher who had the most students who were struggling, both helping the teacher with the skills she needed to boost student learning and also helping directly instruct the students.

In our district, the coaches are the vehicle between the district and the building, so we transfer information

from the district through coaching rather than through the stand-and-deliver model. Instead of giving teachers the district's list of reading strategies, we go in and model them. Three years ago, we adopted a new reading curriculum and as part of the launch, I modeled shared and guided reading lessons for all the teachers. I visited every classroom.

I try to work with every grade level during the year, co-planning with teachers and co-teaching for kids, modeling then checking in, talking and working when necessary with targeted students until teachers can apply strategies in their own settings.

I began working with the speech/language pathologist and the resource teacher. It's been huge learning for those teachers, but we're also seeing the impact with students. Kids are making the connections in the different classroom settings from the strategies the teachers are learning, and the classroom teachers are noticing that.

I've been able to take some risks so that the teachers can see that I'm also a learner. You have to be excited about learning yourself.

We started lesson studies late last year. Teachers were a little reluctant to sign up, but I did some recruiting and got a team going. The impact was huge. We planned the lesson together, observed students, and as soon as the teachers came back, they were in awe. They found something they could go back and use in their classroom that afternoon.

I think of coaching like a classroom. There are people you model for and work with a short time and that work has a huge impact. Then there are some that you just check in with on a regular basis to support them. There are some with whom



you need to do more intentional planning on how to support them. It's differentiated coaching.

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