



IT WORKED!

*Build relationships. Show you care.
Change is hard but it is possible.*

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As Multi-site Math Instructional Facilitator planning and collaborating with teachers is one of the most important “jobs”. I understood that true collaboration and change can only happen if I build strong relationships with the teachers I’d be working with. Knowing that teachers had to already adjust to not having a full-time coach at their school, it was especially important for me to build relationships. This brings us to my story; how I built a relationship with a reluctant third grade educator this year.

We had our initial grade level meeting in October (as I started later than the school year began) with the third-grade team. By this time, I had only engaged in casual conversations with this teacher and was feeling really good about our first meeting. This good feeling quickly disappeared after she came to the meeting 20 minutes late and judging by her body language did not want to be there. After getting to know each other a bit better, I wanted to find out what her thoughts were on the long-term goals for her third-grade students. The immediate answer was, “Memorizing their multiplication facts”. As a good steward, I asked her to elaborate on it and explain how this will help students in the long run. She immediately became defensive and expressed she did not know what I wanted her to say. Although it took me by surprise, a quick reflection on my part helped me to carry on and move to the next topic. At the conclusion of our meeting we agreed that I would bring some math games for her class to try and look at some formative assessments she may be able to use.

A few days later, I stopped by her classroom during her planning time delivering what I promised. She was adjusting desks and out of the blue she expressed that she was sorry for what happened at our meeting, and that she didn’t know what got into her and she was not a “monster”. I expressed to her that I truly appreciated her bringing it up. I also noted that we didn’t have to be friends however we must have a respectful and professional relationship as it is ultimately about the students. At this point, she moved closer and gave me a hug.

This hug had started something. I continued to work closely with her third-grade peer, modeling lessons, planning, and finding resources. Although I supported her as well in the classroom, there was still some friction. I focused on her personal life, trying to get to know her much better as I felt this is my way in to change her traditional practice of timed multiplication tests, whole group guided instruction, etc. Eventually we started to talk more math. After introducing specific games to her to play with her students, she was very excited! The next day, she approached me and asked if I could help her introduce the game to her students. We had the best time. Students are now playing games much more often in the classroom as they work on their multiplication fluency. Engagement is authentic. Realizing this positive change, she wanted more. She realized there are other ways to teach math. “When are you coming in for another fun activity?”

I’ll be there soon. I’ll be there soon!

Moral of the story: Build relationships. Show you care. Change is hard but it is possible.

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