



IT WORKED!

Whatever It Takes!

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Elementary Math Coach

The first year of mathematics coaching should be a time of building relationships, getting to know the system, and sharing experiences. But this was not the case for a new coach that was assigned to a focus school. This school carried the burden for the academically distressed high school, which it supported because it was the largest elementary school in that feeder pattern.

She was tasked with the responsibility to show definitive change both in the short-term transition of her existing 5th graders into middle school and develop a long term plan that would build a strong mathematical program within the school. She reported to me, her district math administrator, that students who had just been promoted to middle school were unprepared; STAR scores indicated 82% were not proficient with the State Assessment recording 77% not proficient.

The task assigned to both the district math program administrator and the new coach was simply stated by the Director of Elementary Education, “Do whatever it takes!” Our job was to support two fairly new teachers to close this achievement gap. The first had been teaching for two years and the second teacher was in the non-traditional licensure program.

We developed a push-in coaching model which focused on planning, co-teaching, and post-conferencing/reflection. We planned with the goal of maximizing the weekly impact of our push-in team. We pushed in at varying times, sometimes it was the introduction to a major concept, at other times summarizing a chunk of developing concepts, and many times focused on depth of understanding of a major learning objective.

The team consisted of the classroom teachers, the math coach, and the district math program administrator. We pushed in once a week for the entire 90 minute block. We used this coaching model for nearly three 9-week periods. Students were ability grouped to allow for differentiated and individualized instruction. We found ourselves moving students to more challenging groups as their level of understanding and confidence grew. We also found our struggling group growing smaller and smaller as the year progressed.

Planning was done weekly with the coach and the classroom teachers. This led to discussions on how to consolidate lessons, develop instructional strategies, and incorporate the use of technology. It was a time to collaborate, make suggestions, plan the sequence of events during the push-in, and to anticipate the struggles which were projected by pre-test or teacher/coach observations.

There were two definitive outcomes because of this coaching model. One was teacher/coach growth and the other was student achievement. One factor that we feel led to this growth was the time for reflection and conferencing with the teachers after each lesson. We found ourselves growing as professionals in the development of students’ mathematical skills at various level of readiness. We developed an open, two-way line of communication focused on ways of moving students deeper into their understanding and application of mathematics.

We were able to collect data to evaluate the effectiveness of our efforts. These data suggest that student achievement was substantially affected by this type of coaching!

STAR:

Average beginning of the year grade equivalent was 4.1

Average end of the year grade equivalent was 5.2

ACT Aspire Interim Assessment:

Interim I 29% proficient

Interim III 50% proficient

This coaching model was effective because it developed instruction which was student-centered, focused on engagement, and individualized for small groups of students. Our novice teacher began to interact productively with expert teachers and the coach and our non-traditional teacher felt successful and supported.

My coach is now a fundamental member of the district's coaching team.

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