



IT WORKED!

From Being Coached to Being a Coach

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My story begins with a young novice teacher who had only taught a few years and had only taught 1st grade. She came to my school and was assigned to teach all the 5th grade sections for my school. This meant that she would teach four periods of 5th-grade math. Also, she considered herself more a “literacy person” than a “math person,” so she was very nervous about this new teaching assignment. This teacher had been in one of my math trainings several years earlier so we knew each other and had begun building a relationship.

We started out the year by planning her math lessons together and spending great deal of time on strengthening her math content knowledge after school. She would teach a lesson and afterward we would discuss how she thought the lesson went. We did this for a few weeks, but the classes were not going very well. I realized at this point that I needed to model more for her so she could see what a good math lesson might look like.

So, we continued to plan together; however, from this point forward, I taught the last period of the day. The novice teacher was free to chime in or ask questions as she watched my model lessons. She also floated around the room and helped children as they worked. Then we met after school discuss each lesson. The teacher asked questions and many times we adjusted the lesson. The next morning she taught the lesson to the 1st period class while I was there to assist, remind her of important points, and float around the room to help the class. After this she taught her second- and third-period classes on her own.

It was amazing to see how much this teacher grew—both in content knowledge and in how she presented this knowledge to her class. Because fifth grade content was new to her, we continued to use this model for the whole year. I knew she needed the support and felt that this was the best use of my time and energy. I felt that if I gave her the support she needed, we were going to see some results in her practice.

This novice teacher continued to teach fifth grade math for several more years and even began to see herself as a mathematician. After a couple of years, my school district decided that since the school we worked at was so large they were going to hire a second math coach. This now not-so-novice teacher applied and got the job! Since then, we’ve worked together to coach other teachers and improve math education in our school.

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