



## IT WORKED!

### *First Steps in Coaching a Resistant High School Teacher*

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Several years ago, our leadership team, including myself, were mentoring a very traditional high school teacher who taught primarily through lecture and was frustrated that his students weren't "getting it." We asked him how he knew if his students understood what he taught when they left at the end of his class. His response was through formative and summative assessments in subsequent classes, on which the students frequently did poorly. We discussed implementing daily exit tickets, with one or two short answer questions, to see what the students understood and didn't. He returned saying the students' performance was improving. The following year, we continued to work together on the questions themselves, making them more open ended with specific student learning goals in mind. After doing this, we discussed how to use the information from the exit tickets to plan the next classes and future assessments.

What I learned from this mentoring cycle was first, start with small changes. This teacher would not have responded well to suggestions leading to major reform, but was willing to add this small procedural piece (using exit tickets to determine student learning), which led to willingness to other small modifications (using these same exit tickets to help plan further instruction). Second, because I suggested only minor changes in his routine, this helped my relationship with this teacher. He learned to trust me and knew that I wouldn't push him into doing things he wasn't comfortable with and therefore, was more willing to accept other suggestions in subsequent years.

On reflection, I would encourage him to analyze the data and results from the exit tickets, formative, and summative assessments, more thoroughly to ensure student understanding and to plan further instruction more purposefully.

NOTE: This coaching took place over several years at my previous school, where my role was as a mentor teacher for all subject areas at one small high school. I am currently in my first year as the math coach for Bentonville and Bentonville West High Schools in Bentonville, Arkansas.

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