



IT WORKED!

Once a Teacher, Always a Teacher

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My story begins as an elementary teacher. While I left my classroom position over 9 years ago, I still teach kids almost every day. My role as a math specialist was not an immediate transition. I began as a reading and math interventionist. The position was new and I stumbled my way through pulling groups, pushing into classrooms, and trying to determine best practices for intervention. It wasn't until I stopped trying to find the perfect formula for my position and focused on teaching and learning, that I began to emerge as a leader. My co-teaching experiences allowed me to develop rapport with my peers and implement the initiatives that were the focus of our professional development sessions. After 8 years, I decided to see if my skill set transferred to a new environment, so I interviewed and accepted a position at a smaller rural school with a higher FARM and ELL population.

As I prepared to start my year in a new school, I spent a lot of time thinking about how I would prove myself to be an essential part of the learning community. The role of a math specialist was only in its second year of existence at this school, and the previous specialist teacher had built relationships and credibility by starting as a classroom teacher. It was for this reason that I decided that the best way for me to start strong was to simply teach. On the second day that teachers returned for the new school year, I had the opportunity to facilitate a math professional development session that focused on reinventing the math block through implementing instructional routines. This initiative provided the perfect platform for me to forge relationships by guest teaching in different classrooms.

Knowing that some of the routines were new to me and that I wanted to get to know the students, I approached each primary teacher and asked if I could try one of the number sense routines in their classroom. Over the course of the first month of school, I was able to teach in every kindergarten, first grade, and second grade classroom. We took time during our bi-weekly PLC sessions to talk about the routines, and share success stories and stumbling points. Demonstrating my vulnerability and continued need for growth helped to ease the line between the role of a specialist and a classroom teacher. In the end, teaching is the heart of what we do and starting our relationship in the classroom seemed natural. Since my initial guest teaching moments, I have been approached to help teams plan, unpack complex content standards, and aid in developing Student Learning Objectives connected to individual Professional Development Plans. I still have a long way to go in developing the role of a math specialist at my school, but I think I'm off to a strong start.

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