



IT WORKED!

Coaching Conversations Transform Student Conversations

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My coaching journey began as I embarked on a group book study with *Coaching Conversations: Transforming Your School One Conversation at a Time* by Cheliotas and Reilly. I had started to assume new responsibilities as I transitioned from an interventionist to a math leader at my school; however, prior to reading this book, I did not visualize myself in the math “coaching” role. I realize now that I was approaching stage one of leadership growth: “making a difference in self.” This book not only opened my eyes for the need to learn more in order to be an effective math coach, but it also facilitated a positive growth mindset and steps for successful implementation.

I started this endeavor with developing coaching conversations by building stronger relationships through mindful, committed listening that led to higher levels of trust with my colleagues and to more candid, intentional conversations. These conversations helped lay the foundation for the following year when I engaged our staff in a book study for professional learning using *Number Talks* by Sherry Parrish. This book was chosen not only to help increase number sense in our primary school (Prek-2nd), but also to build an understanding of strategies through student explanations. The book study provided the opportunity for us to be able to collaborate, plan, set goals, and use reflective feedback. In addition, it permitted me to grow in asking more effective open-ended questions, rather than giving advice. This allowed the teachers to become empowered in the solutions. Teachers began to apply what they were learning through our professional learning communities on student discourse in their classrooms, by creating and sharing their own targeted mathematical discussions, incorporating connections to the curriculum.

Using coach-like conversations as a tool was a catalyst to begin not only transforming our professional conversations, but also sparking us to work on building our capacities for facilitating student-led conversations within the classrooms. As a result, these conversations have helped all of us begin the process of shifting how we approach teaching mathematical concepts, and of shifting me, personally, into stage two of leadership growth: “making a difference in others.” Our conversations with one another continue to be productive, as we work together to construct a stronger community of learners. Observing the growth in student discourse within the classrooms is a reflection that our professional progress is working.

Brought to you by the NCSM Coaching Committee (December 2015)

Special thanks to the ems&t!: Elementary Mathematics Specialist & Teacher Leaders Project

