

Instructional Coaches & Classroom Teachers

Sharing the Road to Success



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SHELL EDUCATION

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Starting Down the Yellow Brick Road

Thoughts About Coaching


- Coaching is about communication.
- Coaching is about sharing visions to improve student achievement.
- Coaching is about the desire to be inspired and to be inspiring.
- Coaching is about professional growth—not performance, supervision, or evaluation.

Some Observations About Teaching and Coaching



A teacher was standing in front of his class sharing the exciting news that he had been contacted by the local TV station. The station wanted to do a story about teachers who go above and beyond their duties to make learning come alive for their students. He explained that the story would cover the field trip he had planned for the class. He began to expound on the details of their upcoming trip to the zoo. He was recounting an exhaustive list of preparations he had completed to ensure the outing was educational as well as a memorable once-in-a-lifetime event. His enthusiasm was inspired by the intense effort he had put into each and every detail. He shared with his students a schedule for the day that included an exciting tour of the zoo guided by a world-renowned expert, an opportunity to assist the zookeeper in caring for and feeding the animals, and eating lunch in the aviary. As he came to a close, he waited expectantly for a response. As the class remained silent, a voice in the back said, “Yeah, but what’s in it for us?”





Can you relate to this scenario? As teachers, we are often frustrated when students seem to miss the point and purpose of our efforts, which is to serve them in ways that are beneficial to them. However, they have to be willing learners for the actions we take to move them to a desired outcome. A willing learner has to be able to answer the compelling question, “What’s in it for me?”

Coaches, like teachers, have similar experiences. Many teachers operate with this same query when confronted with opportunities to work with a coach. Teachers want to see the purpose and point of it all. With no time or energy to spare, they want answers to “What’s in it for me?” This is an important question to consider before any effective work with a coach can begin. By effective work we mean work that will result in profit and gain for both students and teachers.

The vignette on page 19 illustrates the hard work and effort that teachers contribute in order to make their instruction meaningful, even though it goes unrecognized by the students. This also occurs with coaches. They spend endless hours preparing, reading, researching, and practicing new ideas before entering into a coaching relationship with fellow educators. But we know that regardless of their efforts, the question “What’s in it for me?” still needs to be answered. This question is one that both teacher and coach need to consider.

Let’s begin to answer that question by relating it to a condition we all experience in our schools today—stress over testing. It seems that an enormous amount of our time with students is spent administering test after test after test. It is easy to become so involved with meeting deadlines for mandated testing and reporting that we ignore the real benefit that can be reaped from these assessments. The real and true purpose for testing is not to render judgment, but rather to seek information that will assist us in serving our students. However, the real purpose can get lost in the task if we fail to retrieve what’s in it for teachers and students.