



IT WORKED!

Change is Good

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Change Is Good

I wanted to share a story about my journey as a coach when I took on the challenge of moving schools. After six years of coaching a high-functioning team, I was asked to move to a different school that had never had a math coach. Since my team was highly collaborative and active members of the mathematics community in our district, I was ready to accept the challenge of a new school.

At my new school, I quickly realized that I had a difficult road ahead of me. This school did not have an established professional learning community among the team members. In fact, there was little to no evidence of collaboration. I was welcomed by some teachers and questioned by other teachers. The math team was unsure of what a math coach was, and what I was going to require of them. Some also indicated that they weren't sure if they wanted me "in their space." I knew that the relationships I formed with the teachers would dictate how much influence I would have with this team. I became an integral part of the school community so that I could better understand the culture in the building. I spent a significant amount of time building relationships with individual team members and began to establish norms and routines for team collaboration. Building a strong relationship with the math team leader was also an important part of the change. We needed to work together to help grow the math teachers in the building.

Even though I had had several years of successful coaching experience, I was now facing new challenges. At times I felt like I was a new math coach all over again. I had to grow in ways that I had not been stretched before. I learned that while my team had many diverse needs, it was important to begin with one clear focus for the work I did with the team. Our district leaders had charged the math coaches with helping teams unpack the content standards, collaboratively plan and implement worthwhile math tasks, and increase student discourse in the classroom. Planning collaboratively with each team member was the best strategy for continuing to build trust, establish my credibility as a content resource, and to begin to impact instructional practice. I developed a weekly schedule where I was planning with teachers and following up with support in their classrooms as much as possible. Just making the schedule was important, but I also made sure to adhere to any agreements I made with teachers. I needed them to feel that I wanted to be there with them. I also wanted to protect my time in the building so that I wasn't used for other important school problems that arise on any given day.

While I had my fair share of setbacks, I found that over time I saw a transformation within the team. Teachers were more comfortable planning collaboratively with me and began to reach out to plan with each other. Teachers were asking more questions about the content and were willing to try new strategies in the classroom. My new team had a long journey ahead, but I am so proud of the strides they have made.

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

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

