



IT WORKED!

Direct Instruction to Teacher-as-a-Facilitator

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I had a fifth-grade teacher who had been teaching fifth grade for over twenty years. She was also the only teacher at that grade level and had been for the last 5-7 years. She was completely traditional in her teaching methods and when we analyzed her data from the previous year's interim and summative assessments, she was seeing little to no growth in her students. She was however, willing to try a new approach as long as there was daily support after seeing the success of a fourth-grade team of teachers who had implemented a workshop model the previous year.

At the beginning of the year we agreed to plan together daily. We dissected the lesson for the upcoming day, with me taking the role of the classroom teacher and her the student to strengthen her content knowledge and conceptual understanding of the mathematics. Her typical math block consisted of a thirty-minute direct instruction, whole group lesson and approximately 30 minutes of independent work. She initially agreed to use an activity one day a week. Eventually, we moved from one day a week to every day. Then I convinced her that we should break the students into groups, arguing that she would be more effective remediating students in small groups.

I created a four-block grid for her to place students' names as she monitored their guided and independent practice: 1) students who already knew the concept before she started, 2) students who knew the concept after one example, 3) students who were beginning to grasp the concept after the lesson, and 4) students who still did not understand the concept at the completion of the lesson.

Together we created small group activities for each of these four groups. Initially she didn't believe there would be any students who fell into the "knew the concept prior to the lesson" category. However, after two or three weeks she realized that she did, in fact, have six to eight students in that group each day. She initially wanted to spend her time working with the students who didn't know the concept at all at the end of the lesson, but after several weeks she began to see that working with the students who were close to grasping the concept gave her the biggest bang for her buck.

As we worked together, her lessons became more geared toward each group of students. She asked different, better questions. Our next step was to work toward a workshop model in her classroom. Again, we planned for instruction daily. This planning included incorporating higher level questions into her mini-lesson and game-like activities that focused on reinforcing student skills in areas of need.

These were students who needed skills reinforcement but had working background knowledge. Each day we worked together to plan the upcoming lesson, using data from formative assessments we gathered the previous day which allowed for pre-grouping of students and planning the activities for each group. The teacher then worked with a small group of students who were close to getting the concept the previous day, while I worked with students who needed enrichment. The remainder of the students worked on remediation activities. By the end of the year the teacher was able to plan and group her students individually and she had 93% of her students score proficient on the state assessment and 100% of her students showed growth.

This approach worked for this teacher because she felt supported through the entire process, due to the scaffolding that I provided. I realized that the traditional model of coaching a teacher for a period of nine weeks was less effective than when I continued working with a teacher for a full year. This

teacher was able to implement these strategies independently the following year, only needing my assistance in particular areas. She came with purposeful questions about specific activities. She is now a lead teacher in the building in the area of mathematics.

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