

78.

TEACHERS DON'T THINK THEY HAVE ENOUGH TIME FOR COACHING

Talia was an experienced coach who was flexible and creative in finding ways to meet with teachers. She consistently lobbied for collaborative team planning time and was always willing to meet folks halfway when it came to coaching sessions. Talia offered to come in early or stay late to accommodate different teacher schedules. Although most teachers were receptive, a few teachers still resisted working with her, stating that they were already overwhelmed and that coaching was “just another thing” to add to their full plate.

Time is the ultimate non-renewable resource. When a coach is able to help teachers find time for meaningful coaching cycles and dialogues that impact student outcomes, teachers will come to see the coach as a genuine thought-partner. The trick is to encourage teachers to take a risk so that coaching isn't shot down before it can even get started.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

Do teachers have a clear understanding of your role as coach and the services you offer? How do you know?

What does teacher collaboration look like? Is time built into the master schedule for collaboration?

Have other teachers worked with you so that your reputation is known?

How reliable have you been to teachers in the past?

Do the teachers who aren't interested in coaching have any commonalities? How might that give you a window into helping them?

What haven't you tried when it comes to this issue?

PLAN A: CAN'T MAKE TIME

Teaching takes a heavy cognitive toll, so if a teacher already struggles with organization and planning, the idea of using a planning or prep period to meet with a coach can be overwhelming.

Set up a short Enrolling Meeting:

- Start with, "Can we talk for 15 minutes?"
- Let the teacher pick the location and send a friendly calendar reminder
- Bring a treat
- Share a 1-pager or menu of your services
- Follow a clear agenda and outcome for your meeting
- Focus on realistic, teacher-created student-learning goals
- Use **Coaching Question Stems (Appendix)** to prepare questions ahead of time
- Finish with, "How interested are you in continuing to work with me?"

If time is still an issue, get creative!

- Ask to have lunch with the teacher so that you can talk informally
- Host a Fast 15 (minute) PD weekly with new and easy to implement strategies to bring folks in. Follow those up with an observation or debrief meeting

PLAN B: WON'T MAKE TIME

Resistance can take on many forms, and intentionally not making time to meet with a coach is one of them. Reflect on why this person may be resistant to working with you.

Have they had experience with coaching in the past?

Are they on a plan of assistance or improvement prescribed by the principal?

Could they be afraid of what your conversations may uncover? (i.e. do they feel ineffective?)

Be creative to get your foot in the door!

- Use every interaction possible to get to know them as a person and their beliefs about teaching
- Consider every interaction an opportunity for thought-partnering
- Pick a strategy that you think would be of interest to the teacher, and ask if they would be willing to let you 'try-out' that strategy with their students
- Use **Coaching Conversation Planning Tool (Appendix)** to prepare for topics that may come up in a team meeting or informal conversations

PLAN C: SEND A WEEKLY SURVEY

Given the constricted time that teachers and coaches have to meet, a coach needs to be creative and systematic about their approach to addressing teacher needs. It may not be feasible (for either parties!) to meet regularly, especially if teachers don't believe they are able to make time for a coaching relationship.

Instead, a coach can send out an optional weekly survey or form to get a quick, easy, and confidential read on what is on each teacher's mind.

1. **Make decisions on when the survey will be sent.** For instance, Monday mornings are an optimal time to send a form that will prime a teacher to think about their upcoming week. Friday morning can be a time for teachers to reflect on the week and communicate burning questions before leaving for the weekend.
2. **Use Sample Weekly Teacher Survey (Appendix)** and decide how you will regularly distribute the form. Google Forms is an ideal medium to digitally send a form (since there is very little prep), but a hard copy can also be slipped in teacher mailboxes.
3. **Communicate to teachers** that you will be offering a quick and easy way to know more about what is happening in their classrooms and identify possible areas of support via the survey. Make sure to note that this is confidential and optional!
4. **Send the survey at the same day and time every week.** While some teachers may respond regularly, others might only respond occasionally or skip it altogether (that's okay!). Review the responses within 24 hours.

You do not need to respond to everyone, especially if they are not requesting a follow-up meeting. However, if you notice a question or idea that a teacher is struggling with, this is your chance to jump in and offer a resource or offer coaching! As responses come in, you may be surprised that teachers who appear resistant actually have a lot to say.



Pro-tip: Add this task to your calendar weekly so that you don't accidentally fail to remember. Teachers will only respond if they expect the form regularly.



FACTORS FOR SUCCESS	PITFALLS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✦ Be creative and flexible ✦ Create an emotionally safe environment ✦ Appreciate the spirit of inquiry ✦ Develop a survey 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✘ Unwittingly turning away a bid ✘ Thinking that you're expected to have all the answers ✘ Attempting to 'change' or 'fix' a teacher

YOU GOT THIS!

Think about a time when you were resistant to change, whether it was professional or personal.

Why did you put up roadblocks? How did you respond to others who wanted to help? Don't discount teachers when they resist! They usually have valid reasons that need to be addressed.

Listen with an open heart.



READ THIS

Cathy Toll, *Surviving But Not Yet Thriving: Essential Questions and Practical Answers for Experienced Literacy Coaches* (2009).

APPENDIX TOOLS

Coaching Question Stems

Coaching Conversation Planning Tool

Sample Weekly Teacher Survey

SEE ALSO

#17 TEACHERS DON'T UNDERSTAND THE ROLE OF COACH

#25 TEACHER IS RESISTANT TO CHANGE

