

23.

TEACHER IS HESITANT TO TRY SOMETHING NEW

While some teachers display open resistance to change, there are others who are keen to try something new but hold back for fear of being vulnerable. In some instances, teachers experience anxiety during classroom observations that is akin to stage fright, while for others their hesitancy simply comes out of concern for protecting the learning environment they have created from perceived distractions. A skilled coach will spend time unpacking the factors that contribute to a teacher's reluctance, and find ways to provide an authentic, safe space for learning. In the best case scenario, a coach will encourage hesitant or anxious teachers to take small risks in order to build self-efficacy and set the foundation for future coaching conversations.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

Is this teacher new to the field, or an experienced educator?

What fears might this teacher be holding?

What experience has this teacher had with coaching in the past?

What are your own beliefs about this teacher and their engagement with students?

PLAN A: APPLY RECIPROCITY

Often, a teacher's hesitancy stems from self-protection. Every day, teachers must protect their time, their resources, and their emotional well-being. At the same time, coaches often feel that they are "giving too much" of themselves, leading to a feeling of depletion and isolation.

By applying reciprocity, you can energize both of your roles with a mutually beneficial relationship. Coaches can learn as much about instruction as the teachers with whom they work. Ask yourself, "What can I learn from this person?"

START HERE

1. Ask if you can observe a strategy they use in their classroom for your own learning. Since this doesn't necessarily require a pre/post conference, it's low stakes for the teacher.
2. If the relationship isn't quite primed for conversations about professional practice, ask if they have a good recipe, fitness tip, travel destination, or book. Remember: if you ask for it, you've got to use it!
3. Ask the teacher to take a risk with you as an opportunity to practice your own coaching skills. Say, "Would you be willing to let me practice a coaching strategy with you? I could really use a partner that will give me feedback."
4. Explicitly thank the teacher with a card, a small gift, or public acknowledgement.



PLAN B: APPLY APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY

Appreciative Inquiry (AI) takes a strengths-based approach to the coaching relationship. If a client hesitates due to a lack of confidence or experience, AI can help empower a teacher to discover their own strengths and put them into practice.

Try the five steps (often called the 5 Ds) as a framework for questions during a meeting:

Define: “What are your aspirations for your students and for your classroom? And for yourself?”

Discover: “What are your successes or strengths in the classroom?”

Dream: “What are your hopes and wishes for this school year? What do you imagine could happen?”

Design: “What would happen if you took what’s already working and combined it with your hopes and aspirations?”

Destiny: “How can we create your ideal? How can I help as your coach?”

After letting these questions settle for a day or two, meet with the teacher again to discuss any new insights and draft a coaching plan.



FACTORS FOR SUCCESS

- ✧ Remain positive and hopeful
- ✧ Check in frequently
- ✧ Learn from each other
- ✧ Pay attention to body language

PITFALLS

- ✖ Pushing too hard
- ✖ Inserting a personal agenda

YOU GOT THIS!

As renowned fashion consultant, teacher, and mentor Tim Gunn says, “Being surrounded by peers going through the same struggle is so valuable. They can help one another figure out how to do it. One student may not be able to see what makes her own work special, but she will be able to tell her friend, ‘I love your work!’”

Be the person who helps another see what makes their work special, and helps them through a productive struggle.



READ THIS

Elena Aguilar, *Onward* (2018), pp. 183-185.

Jim Knight, “Partnership Principle 7 Reciprocity: The Radical Learner’s Approach to Reform” (Aug. 28, 2018).

Gary Waddell, “Who’s That Teacher? A Matrix Shows How to Support Teachers at Different Levels” in *Learning Forward* (Summer, 2009).

APPENDIX TOOLS

Coaching Question Stems

Coaching Conversation Planning Tool

SEE ALSO

#25 TEACHER IS RESISTANT TO CHANGE

