



How Do You Teach a Teacher?

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"But what do you do? I don't understand what you are going to do today."

"Today, I am leading professional development; I'm teaching teachers."

"How do you teach a teacher?"

For the 2021-2022 school year, I am doing education consulting full-time. Depending on the school, my work varies. My son does not understand my work which is why the dialogue above happened. However, the bulk of my work consists of professional development. Professional development seems to be a thorn in the side of many teachers because of the poor execution. Some school leaders and teacher coaches do not understand how to teach teachers. Without this understanding, teachers are not learning and growing as much as they could be which trickles down to impacting learning in the classroom.

One promise I made to myself once I started leading professional developments was to make it useful, meaningful, and full of knowledge teachers could immediately implement.

I start my process of teaching teachers by talking to administration. I want to see what issues they believe are prevalent and what their areas of concern are. Second, I observe classrooms. I coached teachers for five years. Teacher coaches, many times, have more flexibility in their schedules to stay in classrooms longer. I use the data I collect to inform my professional development decisions. I look at classroom management, classroom environment, and content knowledge implementation.

Next, I talk to teachers and collect information through a survey. Teachers are not empty vessels. They should have input in their professional development. One of my pet peeves in life is completing surveys and nothing is done with the feedback. I then list all the areas of growth teachers have identified and categorize it.

Then, I look at school goals and the school improvement plan. It is important to know what the school goals are and what is in the plan. I take my observations and mesh them with teacher and administrator feedback to identify the main areas of focus. Then, I map them to the school goals and improvement plan.

Resources should be readily available. I create a digital hub to house any resources I shared during professional development I have facilitated. I also explicitly state how the professional development I am implementing ties to school goals and the areas the teachers and administrators identified as areas of need.

I give work time to actually incorporate the new knowledge. I loathe professional developments when the entire time is spent on dumping information without time to plan on how the information will be used. During this time, teachers have the opportunity to write lessons and practice implementing the lessons. I also set deadlines for implementation, but the

deadlines are three to four weeks out to accommodate the fact that most teachers plan ahead and might need time to incorporate the new strategy they learned.

I observe the practice in action to assess how I need to further support teachers. Then, I emphasize that the new knowledge is a way of life. When I facilitate the next professional development, I try to be intentional about connecting previous professional development learning to new learning. This is my process for teaching teachers.

To my son I said, "Teachers have to learn skills like everyone else. It is my job to help teachers learn new skills so students like you are successful."