Becoming accustomed as a coach to not having your own classroom or your own students was probably challenging. I am sure, however, you quickly engaged in conversations with your colleagues about offering to demonstrate or co-teach some lessons to those teachers willing to share their students with you. Although alien at first, I'll bet it was very rewarding to work with students again and feel that great "high" that a teacher feels when the lesson worked well.

In fact, I bet it worked so well that you offered to teach regularly in that teacher's classroom, basking in the knowledge that "you still had it" when connecting with students. If the teacher needed to leave for a moment (or longer), you were in the classroom and had no qualms about continuing the lesson while the teacher needed to go to the office to deliver some paperwork, duplicate some materials, or investigate some resources in the library. You were there already so why not become an extra pair of hands for the teacher who is working diligently to focus on SAS, differentiating instruction, test prep, and a host of other equally demanding district requirements.

Here's the danger… as a coach, you are not a lone ranger. You are working with teachers providing helpful "side by side" assistance and engaging them in new instructional practices that enhance student learning. You are nurturing the notion of teachers as reflective practitioners who practice together and learn together in a risk-free environment. If the teachers are not with you in the classroom, how will they understand the nuances of collaboration, consultation, and collective problem solving in a non-evaluative way?

You must build the gradual release of responsibility and help teachers recognize their own potential. Your role is to work one-on-one with the teacher before the class and collaborate about the goals of the day's lesson prior to the actual class period. Identifying the teacher's focus on your part of the modeling helps to ensure that the teacher has an important responsibility in the class, too. During the class, the teacher needs to focus on what the two of you decided was important to accomplish that day. The coach models the evidence-based literacy practices and other instructional techniques for the teacher and helps the teacher to recognize how these practices become the norm for instruction. After the class, the two of you debrief and offer feedback on the lesson asking, "What worked well; Did we meet our goals for the lesson; and How do we know that student learning occurred?"

Working with teachers in classrooms is a wonderful opportunity for coaches to model what the feedback cycle of instruction looks like and to give teachers an opportunity to gain valuable experience in providing feedback to their own students. Remember, feedback is reflective; reflection results in growth.