

In our newest outreach to the coaching community, www.cultureofcoaching.blogspot.com, I wrote about coaches being in the position to disrupt the status quo. That doesn't mean that coaches burst into classrooms or bombard teachers with the "perfect" lesson plan, a flawless instructional delivery, or the perfect remedy to increase student engagement. What it means is that instructional coaches are positioned to encourage ongoing conversations about teaching and learning in ways that are reflective, deliberate, and challenging. It means that coaches and teachers work together and "walk the talk" about innovation, collaboration, and critical thinking. They need to work together to focus on authentic issues and problem-solve to gather the collective wisdom of the group to resolve these issues.

Of course, the school community needs to be ready for these open and honest discussions and share a vision that allows them to acknowledge the uncertainty and change that these discussions will no doubt expose. They need to understand that change is a journey and that it doesn't occur overnight. It takes time, patience, understanding, and vision for change to occur. It also takes someone (or a few) to have the courage to bring a topic forward and ask the appropriate questions that moves the discussion forward.

That's the status quo to which I am referring... if issues and challenges are always approached in the same way, the outcomes will always be the same. If the issues are viewed with a fresh approach, the outcomes are more likely to be different. Asking the right questions (not the same ones), listening with both ears (presuming positive intentions), and giving appropriate feedback (descriptive and non-judgmental) may be disruptive at the moment of impact and liberating at the moment of discovery.

Once coaches build trusting relationships and help others to share their expertise, the norms change. Coaches help teachers and other school leaders let go of their preconceived ideas and become more open to creative solutions. They foster the communication necessary to make those conversations happen. But how do they do that?

One way that coaches disrupt a school's existing "state of affairs" is to make intentional time to engage in professional conversations. This can be accomplished through the establishment of professional learning communities (PLCs), through study groups, and scheduled meeting times. These are times when the content is structured (not just venting about conditions) and the participants focused on using some school wide data to assess student learning needs and identify the changes that are necessary for progress. Comfort levels will probably be challenged because some folks will think that *"if it's not broken, don't fix it."* That mediocrity will not yield

positive growth. Sometimes “okay” is not enough.

This kind of calm disruption does not happen on day one of coaching implementation. The movement actually ebbs and flows as momentum builds, dips, revives and then becomes the new norm. Questions, problems, and solutions are posed. Feelings may get poked and thinking may be challenged. The good news is that this kind of disruption yields changes that make a difference in the lives of students, teachers, and other school leaders. Go for it! (Just do it slowly, thoughtfully, and carefully!)

Click [here](#) to return to Coaching Tip of the Month.