



I think the most important thing is to build a trusting relationship with the people you are working with. Don't act like you have all the answers but that you are going to figure out an answer together. Share with them that you are a lifelong learner, or however you want to say it. If you try something and it works, great. If you try something and it doesn't work, nobody is going to get zinged for that. The only bad thing about trying something that doesn't work is continuing to do it. Be the person who says, "Let's work together to make things better for the kids."

—Deborah Mitchell

Instructional Coach, Metro Nashville Public Schools
Nashville, Tennessee



her suggestion that students practice with response cards before they use them for real was very helpful. Crysta knew her students and had valuable information to share.

Ultimately, if a teacher chooses to teach a strategy in a way that is likely to decrease its effectiveness, the final measure is the goal set by the teacher. Coaches do not have to determine what is good or bad practice; they can simply say, “Well, we have a goal. Let’s see if your modified version of the strategy helps you hit the goal. If it doesn’t, we can always come back and revisit the checklist.”

The power of having a goal is that coaches don’t have to be, as one coached called it, the “fidelity police.” If a teacher wants to modify a practice, that is her decision as a professional. She knows her students best, and she is the one who will be using the teaching strategy. Further, if the teacher hits the goal, then whether she modifies the practice is irrelevant. Indeed, using her experience and understanding of students, she may have improved the practice. However, if the goal is not met, coach and teacher can revisit the checklist to see if the implementation of the practice needs to be refined to better meet the goal. That way, the coach does not end up being in the one-up position of telling the teacher what to do.



Video 4.1

Crysta Learns About
Formative Assessment
From a Checklist



Video 4.2

Cat Learns About
Thinking Prompts
From a Checklist

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for example, “Mrs. Monk, you’re the expert here, am I explaining this concept correctly?”

I like to video record modeling and share the video with teachers in case they wish to review the video before they implement the practice. If time permits, I get together with the teacher to watch and discuss the model lesson, maybe even reviewing the video together so we can talk about any issues that arose during the model.

IN TEACHERS’ CLASSROOMS WITHOUT THEIR STUDENTS PRESENT

When a coach models in front of a teacher’s students, teachers can learn a lot by seeing how the students respond to new teaching strategies. However, in some instances, teachers and coaches might agree that modeling should not occur in front of students. The most obvious reason might be that teachers are not ready to have a coach model in their classrooms and that they would be more comfortable watching the model without students in the room. If this is the case, the teacher’s wishes should be respected.

In many other cases, teachers prefer to have a coach model when students are not in the classroom. This is especially true in elementary school classrooms when teachers are with the same group of students all day. In middle and high school, a coach can model with one group of students and later that same day, the teacher can try out the strategy with a different group.

We have also found that modeling in front of students is not effective when the teacher is working to meet a behavioral goal. If a teacher is trying to reduce disruptions from seventeen per ten minutes to three per ten minutes, for example, it might be difficult for a coach to get students’ attention in the short time period of the model. Conversely, if the coach does get students’ attention and controls the class when the teacher is unable to do that, the coach’s success can make it more difficult for a teacher to manage students since the coach’s success might point out to students the extent to which their teacher is struggling to maintain control. When it comes to behavior, the most effective modeling might be some of the other approaches described, especially visiting another teacher’s class or watching video.



Video 4.3

**Jim Models Using
Response Cards in
Crysta’s Class**



Video 4.4

**Jim Models Using
Open, Opinion
Questions in Cat’s Class**

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to be especially helpful. Finally, John Saphier, Mary Ann Haley-Speca, and Robert Gower's *The Skillful Teacher: Rebuilding Your Teaching Skills*, 6th Edition (2008) is a tremendously valuable resource for any teacher.

Randy Sprick has been a long-term partner with the Instructional Coaching Group, and all of his books are very useful for coaches wanting to learn about classroom management. His book *CHAMPS: A Proactive and Positive Approach to Classroom Management*, 2nd Edition (2010) is a great introduction to his work. Grant Wiggins and Jay McTighe's *Understanding by Design* (2005) is the classic work on designing curriculum. Finally, Jan Chappuis's *Seven Strategies of Assessment for Learning*, 2nd Edition (2014) is a great introductory work on formative assessment, which she, along with her longtime colleague Rick Stiggins, refers to as *assessment for learning*.



Video 4.5

Crysta's Learn
Stage—Complete



Video 4.6

Cat's Learn
Stage—Complete

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