



School Provision #108 – Kelly: "I want more of the good stuff!"

Kelly is a reading Title I coach in her school district. Title I coaches work with teachers in high-needs schools in order to help them improve the outcomes of their students. Kelly went through the Evocative Coaching Training Program (ECTP) in order to help herself improve at the craft of coaching. She wanted to learn how to better work with her Title I teachers to help them improve at the art and science of teaching. And fortunately, the ECTP did not disappoint. It really helped Kelly to develop her understanding of and capacity for effective coaching.

Simply put, Kelly became a better instructional coach by going through the ECTP. Kelly was in her first year as an instructional coach at the time she went through the Program and going through the Evocative Coaching Training Program has helped Kelly to even better motivate and work with the teachers she is coaching. Kelly demonstrated this to herself when she became certified as an Evocative Coach after she graduated from the Training Program. The two facets — training and certification — were a package for Kelly. "I didn't want to go through the Program and have nothing to show for my work," Kelly says. "Certification was important for me. It shows, both to me and to others, that I have mastered the skillset. And that makes me better at what I do."

That is the point of the work we do through the Center for School Transformation. We hope to shift people away from the traditional observation / evaluation model to more of a coaching model. Observation / evaluation has its place, but it doesn't go far enough when it comes to support and skill development in the field of education. The coaching model of observation / mutual, non-judgmental consideration is a much stronger way to go. Putting two heads together with an eye towards improvement, in a judgment-free space, moves things forward both quickly and effectively. Coaching is a strong way to go.

Perhaps that's why coaching is not limited to remediation in High-Risk Schools; in Kelly's school district coaching is designed to support and challenge all teachers, wherever they fall on the skill continuum. Everyone benefits and grows from coaching conversations, whether they are resistant-to-change or eager-to-change teachers. "So how was Evocative Coaching picked as the model to learn, practice, and master?" I asked Kelly. "I think it has to do with the positive nature of the Evocative Coaching model", Kelly replied. "And the Evocative Coaching model has really taken hold," Kelly continued. "It has just become the way we do business around here."

"I especially like what it has done to my relationships with the teachers I coach. Early on, when I start working with someone, I let them know how things will proceed. How I will circuit through every classroom during the first few months, at random intervals, and how I will make myself available for help, coaching, and advice. Things flow naturally after that. Some choose to work with me more, others less. Either way, I continuously make it clear that I am not there to judge. I am there to help."

This approach has been shown to work in situation after situation. Taking a positive, constructive, question-based stance, driven more by the needs of the coachee than by the agenda of the coach, makes everyone more open and eager to change. This is as true for underperforming teachers as it is for

exceptional ones. Initiating the coaching relationship gradually, with a positive stance, opens everyone up to the possibilities for improvement. That's a key element of what we teach people to do through the ECTP. We want instructional coaches trained in the Evocative Coaching model to more intentionally and regularly amplify and build upon what they see their coachees doing well. And when that's the approach, when strengths are the focus, the deficits and struggles tend to more readily fade away.

It's especially important and challenging to keep the focus on strengths when teachers and administrators, districts and divisions, are awash in data. It's tough enough to make sense of all that data, to work with it consistently, in a positive and sensitive way. It's even tougher, as a coach, to take a backseat in the sense-making process. But that's exactly the goal when it comes to Evocative Coaching: to become catalysts for self-directed learning. And that's part of what Kelly learned to do through the ECTP. "It's hard to invite teachers to look at what they are doing, not through my eyes and evaluations," Kelly observed, "but through their eyes. I know I have gotten to that place when a teacher, looking at the observations and data, says: 'Wow! I didn't realize that was happening. I really want to get more of the good stuff.' And I know I have really made a breakthrough as a coach when they say to me, 'Can you help me with this? Can you show me how you would do this, and then we can talk about it together afterwards?' That's when I can really settle down to be their coach."

Kelly learned how to do this well as part of the certification process in Evocative Coaching. As part of that process, applicants have to record, reflect on, and write about how their coaching compares to the Evocative Coaching model. Through this process, Kelly notes, "I was able to look at the data and hear what I sound like. It also gave me a chance to understand why I have not been as effective as I would like. When I listened to my recorded coaching sessions, I said to myself, 'I'm doing all the talking! No wonder the teacher didn't learn anything or make any changes. Until I stop talking all the time, I will never generate, I will never evoke change.'"

"This was an important lesson for me to learn and a valuable way for me to learn it," Kelly continues. "Until I heard how I sounded, until I heard my own voice on the recording and heard how people were responding, I just didn't have the full picture. The certification process was extremely valuable in my continued growth and development as an instructional coach. Certification was far more than just a piece of paper for me. It was a process that has made me even more effective with the teachers I coach."

I hope that Kelly's story may become your story. I hope that you, too, will want to go through the Evocative Coaching Training Program. Training and certification are not formalities and a piece of paper. They are a valuable way to get started or to take your instructional coaching to another level. They can really help you to become more effective. They can really help you to be evocative.

For more information or to register for the next round of training classes, which are conducted live in a phone or Skype-based classroom as part of a live, distance-learning process, write Maura Rawn, info@schooltransformation.com.

May you be filled with goodness, peace, joy, and health.

Bob Tschannen-Moran, MCC, BCC

Co-Author, *Evocative Coaching: Transforming Schools One Conversation at a Time*, [Where to Find](#)