



School Provision #107 – Exciting Approaches for Evoking Greatness in Schools

At the start of the new school year, I had the opportunity to interview another graduate of the Center for School Transformation’s [Evocative Coaching Training Program](#) regarding her experience with and results from the Program. Jodell Allinger’s experience was very, very positive – to say the least. She has a strong story to tell not only as to how the Training Program has changed her approach to coaching but also the results that she is now seeing from her coaching. I find her story to be very inspiring and compelling. I hope you will find it inspiring as well.

Bob: How did you learn about Evocative Coaching and the Evocative Coaching Training Program?

Jodell: I heard about Evocative Coaching and the Training Program while working on my dissertation. Teacher self-efficacy was integrated into your wife’s class and I wanted to learn more. Going through the Evocative Coaching Training Program was a great way to do that.

Bob: Tell me more about the connections you see between Evocative Coaching and building teacher self-efficacy.

Jodell: That’s really what Evocative Coaching is all about: enhancing teachers’ skills and, in turn, their self-confidence. Without the skills, self-efficacy will never be built. The skills alone, however, will also not generate teacher self-efficacy. That takes the confidence that comes from knowing when and how to use those skills. Going through the Evocative Coaching Training Program taught me a lot about how to do that. It has proven to be quite helpful and empowering, both for me and for those with whom I work.

Bob: So it isn’t enough to buy and read the book. To really develop the skillset, you have to explore and practice it with others.

Jodell: Right. There is something at the beginning of the book that defines and describes the Evocative Coaching skillset. This made me look at my own practices. I had to look at what I was doing and to think about how to improve what I was doing. The Evocative Coaching Training Program was a natural answer to that question.

Bob: One of things that we wrote about at the beginning of the book was the difference between self-efficacy and self-esteem. They sound similar, and they are certainly related to each other, but they are very different constructs. What did the Training Program teach you about these constructs and how they are related to each other?

Jodell: Of the two, self-esteem is more of an overarching construct that relates to one’s self-image in the world. Self-efficacy, on the other hand, is very task specific. If you feel confident that you can teach students and that they can learn what they need to learn in relation to a subject or a task, then you have self-efficacy as a teacher in that area. Both are important, both self-esteem and self-efficacy, but high self-efficacy is more important when it comes to teaching.

Bob: It sounds like you have worked a lot with these constructs.

Jodell: Yes. And they relate as much to students as they do to teachers. When I started working, I was working at an underperforming school. At one point I went into a freshman classroom and asked, “How many of you want to graduate?” Every hand would go up. Then I would ask, “How many of you believe that you can graduate?” And it was nowhere near 100%. It was just about our actual graduate rate. That led me to think about the role of hope in education and that led me to the concept of self-efficacy.

One interesting thing was that I did the same exercise at a faculty meeting. “How many of you want every student to meet standard and succeed?” Every hand went up. Then I would ask, “How many of you believe you can get kids there?” And there was a whole lot of “Oh” “Uhm” “Ah”. The hands went up and down and, interestingly, they went up and down at about the exact same rate as things actually turned out.”

So I thought, “I’ve found my gold. When a teacher believed that their students could be successful, it usually turned out that way. If they did not believe that, it usually turned out the other way. These beliefs were self-fulfilling prophecies. I didn’t know anything about the concept of self-efficacy at the time, but it’s that simple. When you believe you can do it, you usually do it. But at the time I didn’t know about the concept of self-efficacy or how it worked. I just thought in terms of hope. People need hope in order to be successful, most of all teachers. When teachers have hope their students pick it up as well. Hope is contagious. It encourages people to have more confidence and to succeed.

Bob: Could you expand on how hope and confidence factor into classroom success?

Jodell: In our school there are a lot of Professional Learning Communities or PLCs. Because I’d been in my career for a while, I ended up being one of the facilitators. As a facilitator, and as our school went through a lot of changes, I heard a lot. People would kind of plop down to get things off their chest. So I would just listen. Sometimes I could help them, by giving advice or offering solutions. But most of the time helping was just a matter of listening.

And that was really why I signed up for and took the Evocative Coaching Training Program. I wanted to develop my listening skills. I didn’t want to be distracted and I did want to listen so as to help people reach their goals as educators. And by learning to listen with the Appreciative Inquiry and Design Thinking skills of Evocative Coaching, I was able to do just that.

Bob: Can you say a little more about how that has helped you?

Jodell: I wanted to enhance my skills as a facilitator, as a listener, and bringing positive, productive solutions into situations. That’s because I’ve always believed that if criticism changed the world, and I’m talking negative criticism, the world would have been changed a long time ago. But it doesn’t do that. Negative criticism is non-productive. It might help air something, but it doesn’t go anywhere. It can hurt a situation more. So I wanted to learn skills that would take me into a better place in how I handled conversations. Evocative Coaching helped me to do that.

Bob: It sounds like you have really learned a lot from and appreciated the Training Program.

Jodell: Very much. I was very familiar with many coaching models in education. Jim Knight’s Instructional Coaching, for example, and Steven Glen’s work on Developing Capable People. When I learned about Evocative Coaching I saw it as a way of going even deeper. And it has really done that for

me. In fact, it has become so important to me that when I pick up a new coaching book, I always go to the back to see if Evocative Coaching is referenced. If not, that tells me something.

There were so many other things I liked about the Evocative Coaching Training Program. For example, you could take it over the telephone, from home; you could connect with people from all around the world; you could develop your skills, you could become certified; and, of course, I could connect with you.

Bob: Thanks. I have enjoyed connecting with you as well. So how is that going for you?

Jodell: It's going well. More and more people are requesting to enter into a coaching relationship with me. It is truly remarkable. I have not yet had a coaching conversation with anyone who has not asked for more. So we're trying to create more time at school for such conversations.

We're also trying to make these conversations, well, evocative. We don't want them to be hand slapping as to what someone is doing wrong. We want them to be supportive of a teacher's learning. We don't want compliance, we want coordination. This has led to some wonderful results of teachers walking toward us now, not dreading the calls or the emails. It's a supportive role. So that fits right in with building the kind of relationships that lead to effective coaching. There are so many things in the Evocative Model that support this. For example, just doing the energy check-in at the start of a coaching conversation, that check-in really makes a difference.

Bob: So what was your best experience in the Training Program?

Jodell: My best experience was the time that I had the opportunity to be coached by you while the rest of the class was listening in. You actually coached me. I was amazed. I think it was the first one in our group. And that coaching has proven to be so helpful to me. I don't mean in terms of any specific strategies that emerged. I mean the peacefulness of it; allowing me time to think when you asked a question. That was wonderful role modelling.

Bob: How have you integrated the principles and practice of Evocative Coaching into your everyday life and work?

Jodell: One is the certification. I got my certification and that now makes me the only certified coach in our district. Another is making coaching more embedded in our culture as a district. So there may be more people coming your way to go through the Training Program! It has also just made me a lot calmer, both overall as person and when I am doing my work as a coach. In fact, I think the listening skills that are part of the Training Program have made me a much quieter coach who does more intentional listening.

The energy check-ins that we learned to use at the start of a coaching conversation have also become integrated into just about all of my conversations with people. The skills that I learned through the Training Program, I am starting to default back to them in my life rather than defaulting back to old habits. I find myself pulling the book out all the time to make sure I am handling things the way you taught us in the classes. It has made my entire approach in relating to others more of a positive, growth-oriented model than a negative, constructive-criticism model.

Bob: That's music to my ears. To think that you have gotten so much out of the training experience and that you are carrying it forward in such a strong way. Wow!

Jodell: It really is a life-changing experience. I especially like the empathy language that I have learned through the Program. The word lists that you have in the book, the lists of feelings and needs, and the Wheel of Needs' diagram. I understand that much more fully as I practice those practices much more consistently than I ever did before. I also take the time after a coaching conversation to think about what went on, how I handled things, and how I would like to handle things in the future. I write this all down so that, when I speak to this person again, we can pick up from where we left off. I say, "Here is where we left off in the last conversation. Do you want to pick up there or do you want to start at a new place, with something else that is going on?" People really appreciate that.

Bob: And I really appreciate the ways that you are integrating the principles of Evocative Coaching into your work. Is there anything else you would like our readers to know?

Jodell: Just that the Training Program really does build one's confidence, one's self-efficacy, not as a teacher but as a teacher supporter. If anyone is in that role, then going through the Evocative Coaching Training Program is a great thing to do.

Bob: Thanks so much for wrapping up on such a strong note. I'm sure it will make many of our readers want to explore this further for themselves.

Jodell: I would certainly encourage them to do that. It really does make a difference.