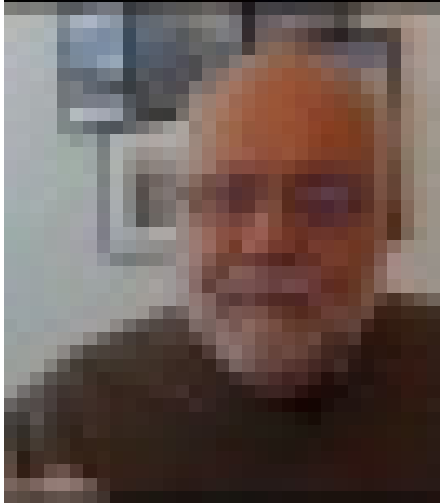


Coaching and Trust

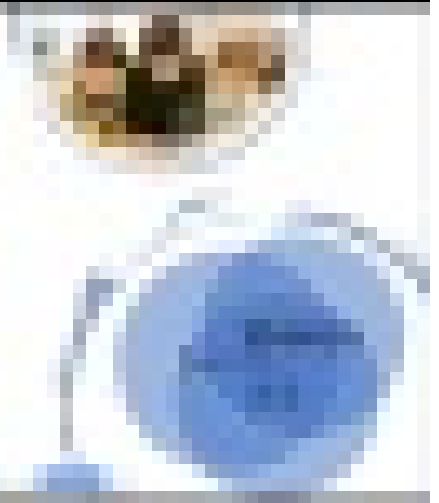
I had the opportunity to be a keynoter for the online Coaching Summit 2019 sponsored by Nicole Turner at Simply Coaching. My presentation, *Respecting Teachers' Goals and Values*, was followed by an interview. Here's the video presentation and my responses to some of the questions in the interview.



What's important to
the family?

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the family?

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the family?



My Conversation with Nicole Turner

Nicole: In your presentation you shared with us about respecting the teacher values when working with teachers. I agree and we have to use this as part of building trust with teachers. I think that building trust is the number one focus of coaches. **So, what are a few more things that you can share with coaches when it comes to building those relationships with teachers?**

Steve: One of the first things I'd suggest, especially if you've got some newer coaches, is to make sure they pull Joellen Killion's writing about [heavy coaching and light coaching](#). Joellen and I were both involved during the early days of coaching. A big mistake made early on was that coaches knew relationships were important and they tended to build those relationships and build trust through what Joellen ended up labeling as a "light" kind of help and support for teachers. What Joellen pointed out was that as time went on, and the coaches looked to get engaged in deeper, critical, important things, there was a tendency for teachers to have mislabeled what coaching was. Joellen was the first one that got me thinking that you build trust by finding the things that are important to the teacher to make happen for students and then show the teacher that you're working with her to make those things happen. I'm big on team building and you build a team by having a common goal.

Steve: Connected to that is building your coaching around changing student learning behaviors. I create trust by getting the teacher to realize I'm not hired as a coach to change teacher behaviors. I'm hired to change student behaviors. So, let's figure out what your students have to do. The term that I use for that is learning production behaviors. What are the behaviors that students must engage in that are going to

generate the learning? And now, what would the teacher do to cause those things to happen? That allows me to step away from whether what the teacher is doing is right or wrong and instead to focus on: here's the goal you wanted to meet with your students. We know that for that goal to be met, students have to spend their time doing these kinds of things. Now what would you do as a teacher to cause students to get engaged in those behaviors? My coaching support will be to change your students learning production behaviors.

Nicole: I love that you spoke about the pre-conference conversations in your video. Can you give a few things that you do to prepare for your pre-conference conversations? I know this is part of the coaching cycle and a lot of times coaches don't know how to start those conversations with teachers. **How do you start those pre-conference conversations?**

Steve: There is not much to preparing other than the mental realization that what I'm about to do is extremely important. For me, the pre-conference is the most important part of the whole coaching cycle. If you conduct the pre-conference appropriately, everything else flows. Because we had a quality pre-conference, I know exactly what it is I should be doing during the observation stage. The teacher knows what I'm doing during the observation stage and then when we meet in the post-conference, I build trust by delivering what we agreed upon. The elements of the pre-conference for me are one, agenda. I want to understand the teacher's thinking so that I'm watching the classroom through the teacher's eyes. The second is arriving at a focus for the conference. That is the easiest way to communicate the difference between coaching and evaluation. An evaluator has to be looking at everything in order to do a fair evaluation. The coach on the other hand is going to disregard the majority of what it is happening and zero in on the focus.

Steve: I like to design the observation tool that the coach is going to use as I'm seated there with the teacher during the

conference. When the teacher sees the coach writing away during the observation, she should know exactly what the coach is writing. There are a lot of templates for observations that you can download. I like to use them for ideas, but I think when teachers pick templates they're not as clear as when we design one together to capture the information the teacher desires.

Steve: The bottom line in the pre-conference is listening. It's in taking the time and seeing that the pre-conference is a reflective growth time for a teacher. If you think about an evaluation pre-conference, evaluators are just gathering information they can use to assist them in doing the evaluation. When you do a quality coaching pre-conference, chances are very good you've impacted the teacher's lesson. Sometimes teachers will change the lesson because of something they thought through. Other times they will be extra conscious of the part that they have you focused on. So that extra consciousness has them practicing a behavior that they wouldn't be practicing in that kind of a conscious format if it hadn't been shared in the pre-conference.



Nicole: What about coaches who coach teachers based on what the principal has assigned in a specific area? For instance, previously in my role, I supported teachers with their PIP plans, professional improvement plans. The administrator has said, "Hey Nicole, I need you to go and talk with a teacher about an area of concern that is part of their plan. Let's try

to move them in this direction.” **What do you say or how do you start that type of pre-conference when working in that situation?**

Steve: I need to bring it back to the teacher’s agenda. Years ago, I worked with secondary reading coaches. They were being sent into math, science, and social studies classrooms to provide teachers with reading strategies. At that time the statement was “every teacher is a teacher of reading.” I suggested to reading coaches that wasn’t a good opening with science teachers. My suggestion was to take the thought “every teacher is a teacher of reading”, and put it in your hand behind your back. Then find out what that teacher had to do. When you’re looking at the textbook with the teacher and you can say, “Wow, this has to be two years above some kids’ reading levels.” That must make it really difficult for you to get students to work with this. If we could find an easier way for kids to learn vocabulary, I’m guessing that would assist you in reaching your science goals. When the teacher says yes, then I’m going to bring out my strategy for teaching vocabulary; a reading skill. We aren’t examining this because the school said you must learn this, and you have to do it. Instead I found a connection to what’s important to this teacher. It’s the same as motivating a student in your content area by finding that key that makes the link to the student. Coaching needs to be connected the teacher’s agenda.

I can give you the severe example of working with a very resistant teacher. I might paraphrase the resistance with, “So you want to change as little as possible and still meet the principal’s requirement.” When the teacher says yes, now I’m willing to work with her. She has committed to some change which might allow me to build experiences that may change her view regarding continuing to change.

The bottom line is finding an element of the teacher’s agenda to build as the focus of your coaching.