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Give-and-take changes the climate

Q How is coaching changing your school?

We're working to change the climate. We have such a successful high school and academic program, successful teachers and students, but we're trying to encourage large-scale peer coaching, having teachers work with instructional coaches, but also having teachers work together.

I teach three periods rather than five out of a nine-period day, so for the first six, I'm available to work with and talk with teachers, to be a resource. Starting a new position that has never existed before, my co-instructional coach and I were wondering how people were going to react and how it would change our dynamics with friends and colleagues. It's been very positive. My co-coach is co-chair of the building social committee, working to bring teachers together to form relationships. She does it because she thinks it's important. That helps.

We've had great conversations with teachers about what's going on in their classrooms, and

about what's going on in our classrooms. They've taken things away from what we've done; we've taken things away from what they've done. Their ideas have been as beneficial as ones we've given them. It's the give-and-take that really gives you a relationship with people. And the fact that we're still teaching three classes a day grounds us in the day-to-day experiences. It shows that we're still out there, still one with the other teachers.

People are encouraged by good experiences with peer coaching. With the peer coaching we've done, we've modeled for other teachers what we're asking them to do with one another. We know they are strong professionals, and the ultimate goal is to have teachers spread the value of what they are learning.

This type of environment — the fact that teachers are leading this staff development — is so empowering because we're all equals, all working together for the common goal of improving instruction for our students, to enhance their lives and their futures. ♦

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