

Coaching is messy! But, then, so is anything in the construction trades!

So what are we constructing? We are constructionists, helping our teaching colleagues construct meaningful learning experiences for their students and helping them implement effective instructional practices. And while nothing is perfect, we help teachers understand that making mistakes can be messy and more importantly, that creates our learning.

Dennis Sparks shared Facebook's guiding principle... *"Done is better than perfect."* What an interesting thing to say about teaching and learning. On one hand, we know that settling for something is just that – mediocre at best – and we want so much more for and from our teachers and students. We want each of them to rise to their fullest potential and exceed all expectations. How do we accomplish that if we accept that "done is better than perfect"?

Maybe there's ground in-between, a middle level of accomplishment that is rooted in practice, experience, rethinking, and reformation. Maybe it's not that we expect perfection but we expect deliberate conversations and intentional problem-solving to create the boundaries for our collaborative work. It is knowing that "good enough" (as per Dennis Sparks) really might mean that our opportunities for non-evaluative feedback and professional conversations are situational and what seems right at a particular moment may change when the situation changes or when more information is available. Perfection means that there is no room for improvement and instructional coaching is all about continuous improvement.

One thinking and behaviors are fluid. After all, the thinking that created the moment, aka the snapshot in time, will become more reflective and result in rethinking our plans and modifying our mindsets as we move our practices forward. It means making a decision, following through with it, reviewing the results, and reconsidering the delivery is what happens when reflection takes place and purposeful planning ensues. It says to the individual, "I tried this; I think I made some mistakes; I learned from the mistakes, and am now taking the time to re-establish the goals and how to accomplish them."

While in some circles, that might sound like preparation was not a priority and that "done is better than perfect," it really means that teaching is dynamic and what is done one day may not be the same thing done in the same way on another day. It means reflecting "about, in, and on" action results in thinking about one's thinking, and making changes where necessary. That's not

mediocrity; that's searching for the best way to deliver instructional practices that accomplish the identified goals.

Instructional coaches shift practice. It's not about providing a list of multiple instructional strategies to implement; it's all about providing numerous opportunities for coaches and teachers to work together and talk about their practices. It's all about collaborating and proper planning that yields thoughtful teaching "stalked" (in a good way) by introspection and immersion into the *"what, so what, and now what"* kind of collective problem-solving when coaches work with their teaching colleagues. It's the ongoing conversations through the *before*

,  
*during*  
, and  
*after*

discussions that encourage colleagues to talk to one another about their practices so that not only are their students benefiting from the professional dialogue, the teachers are too! It's about providing non-evaluative, real-time support while working side-by-side with colleagues to identify effective practices and strengthen the learning for all. That's what we mean by *"done is better than perfect"*

because our practices get better and better each time we "do it" and build capacity. Our *"done is better than perfect"* happens each time we talk about our practices and replay, refine, and retool what we do.

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