

FROM THE STORIED PAST TO THE FABLED FUTURE: STORIES FROM THE CLASSROOM, SCHOOL, AND COMMUNITY THAT SHAPE OUR TEACHING

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THE ANATOMY OF COACHING: THE STORY OF LUCY

Environment

LUCY: holiday spirit, decorations, festive mood, music

COACH: How is the environment conducive to coaching?

Motivation

LUCY: had a reasonable goal; had desire to participate; trusted the coach

COACH: What is the coachee's goal? Does he/she want to be coached? What are the barriers?

Readiness

LUCY: physically nourished and rested; cognitively able to listen and comprehend music and stories; emotionally and socially ready to interact; encouraged by the festive environment.

COACH: Readiness is developmental, intrinsic and gradual. Is the coach ready to coach—physically, cognitively, emotionally? Is the coachee ready to be coached—physically, cognitively, emotionally? What are the barriers to readiness for the coach? For the coachee?

Sensitivity

LUCY: Positive, non-verbal interaction; accepted each other as is

COACH: Does the coach have the honed skills of observation and listening to sensitively establish a relationship? What are the barriers to establishing a relationship?

Assessment

LUCY: Assessment intertwined with actions; processing assessment data was spontaneous, immediate and led to informed decisions.

COACH: Coaches continuously are gathering data; formal and informal data melds. Take time to document; take time to reflect.

Repertoire of Interventions

LUCY: Possibilities: lift her up, get a wheelchair or walker, refer to another worker; I needed to know how to implement the strategy I chose.

COACH: Must know the multifaceted coachee, must know the content, must know the intervention strategies.

Interventions Matched to the Need

LUCY: Strategy of lifting her up; quicker, didn't distract from the goal, didn't lose the momentum, kept her engagement, decreased possibility of disappointment, likelihood of success.

COACH: How does the coach know and decide which interventions to use?

Gradual Release of Responsibility

LUCY: Physically, the ability passed from my body to her body; she took over and accomplished the task; I supported her in her zone of proximal development.

COACH: How does a coach know when he/she is truly in the coachee's zone of proximal development? What are the small and subtle shifts that show the coachee is learning, growing and being successful?

Future Independence

LUCY: Participation limited by physical barriers; each successful experience could lead to another one.

COACH: Sensitive coaching does matter and can impact future growth and independence; what are the actions that can lead to growth and independence--- physically, cognitively, emotionally and socially?

THE PHONICS GAME

Universal Truth: There's more than one way to learn to read.

General Understanding: Phonics is necessary but not sufficient in learning to read.

Essential Question: What do you do when a student comes to a word he/she doesn't know?

Strengths: strong visual memory; ability to attend, listen and remember; ability to organize; ability to create connections; was not distracted or engaged in unwanted behavior.

Weaknesses: weak auditory system; weak auditory memory

What are the different approaches to teaching a child to read? How do you decide how to teach an individual child to read? Do others assist you? Does your school or district have one program for all children? What happens if a child cannot be successful with that program?

How did this student's temperament and strengths help her become a reader? What are some social, physical and emotional barriers that need to be addressed when teaching a child to read?

BUDDY: A FIRST GRADER

Universal Truth: Teaching and learning are about relationships

General Understanding: A teacher-student relationship is not isolated. It is influenced by their collective past and perspectives.

Essential Question: How does your own past experiences play a part in how you teach today?

In this story a teacher and a parent had grown up in the same town and had a history together. The teacher's actions toward the parent's son reflected her anger and resentment. How are teachers susceptible to this same dilemma today? What are the ways in which teachers can identify this problem and take action so the child's learning is not compromised?

What are the advantages and disadvantages of teaching in the same town where you grew up? What are the advantages and disadvantages of teaching in a different town from where you grew up?

up? Do you notice a difference in how you treat children according to their family or community status or economic levels?

Why didn't Buddy tell his parents about the treatment he received from his teacher?

A PERSONAL INVITATION

I hope you have enjoyed my stories today. My fervent hope is that you found the stories worthy of thoughtful reflection. Since my retirement I find that I have become a seeker and collector of stories, especially stories from the K-12 classrooms that relate well to the universal truths of teaching and learning. I feel that all of us have the responsibility to pass on the universal truths of teaching and learning to the next generation of younger teachers.

Do you have a story that illustrates a poignant experience and helped you understand a universal truth? If you do, and if you would like to share it with me, I would like to add it to my collection. I promise to always give you verbal and written credit whenever I share it. To be clear, I do not want the "cutesy" stories that capture the funny things that students do, say and think but I seek the poignant stories—the ones that, in a moment of truth, taught you what it means to be a sensitive, effective teacher.

Feel free to contact me.....and perhaps we'll meet again.....in a story.

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