

Q&A: MATH COACHING

*3 questions with **Laura Smith**, a first-year math coach at Yates Elementary*

1. What is “cognitive coaching”?

As math coach, I serve in many roles. I am a resource for teachers in planning and gathering ideas and materials, I serve as a consultant during planning sessions, and I collaborate with teachers to brainstorm ideas for meeting the needs of all students and determine goals for our math program. The cognitive coaching component of my job is more individualized. Cognitive coaching is a model for mentors to help others mediate their own thinking, reflect on their teaching practices, problem solve and plan for action. As a coach, I don't provide answers; I provide tools that will guide teachers in self-evaluating their own work and making decisions based on self-reflection.

2. How has coaching helped you personally?

As math coach this year, I have recognized the importance of establishing trust and rapport with my colleagues. I truly believe that we have become a community of learners with the same common goal: doing what's best for students. I've also been amazed at what teachers are willing to do in their classrooms when given adequate resources and support. Teacher feedback has made me feel valuable and motivates me to find ways to ensure all students are being taught at their level.

3. What can Yates Elementary achieve through this program?

Because teachers are reflecting on their own teaching and are provided with more resources, students are benefiting from varied instructional strategies. Improved teacher effectiveness will no doubt improve student achievement because more students' needs are being met. New math programs and activities have served as motivators for both staff and students. ... There's a lot of talk about math going on at Yates!

Quotable: “The math teaching and learning I observe in classrooms is proof that when given effective resources, classroom teachers are more than willing to reflect on their teaching, take risks and do whatever is necessary to meet the needs of all students.” – Laura Smith

Elsewhere in Fayette County:

First-year math coaches:

Peggy McKee, Julius Marks Elementary

Rachel Smith, Millcreek Elementary

Second-year coaches:

Pattie Rowland, Crawford Middle School

Julie Tatman, Breckinridge Elementary

The back story: Launched in 2006 with state funding administered by the Kentucky Department of Education, the Kentucky Center for Mathematics coaching program is a long-term initiative for improving the teaching and learning of mathematics in K-12 schools. The primary goal is to increase student achievement by:

- * Helping teachers craft better classroom instruction through conversations structured around effective planning and meaningful reflection
- * Promoting a heightened sense of community among all math teachers in their school building and in their school district

To learn more: www.kentuckymathematics.org/

(Filed by Tammy L. Lane)
