

The Window into Teacher Thinking

| Ability to teach | Ability to explain own teaching practice | |
|------------------|--|--------------------------------------|
| | Don't Know | Know |
| Can't Do | Mysterious Unknown | Theoretical Unable to demonstrate |
| Can Do | Magical Unexplained | Intentional Deliberate practice |

For teachers who do not understand or have the ability to perform a specific aspect of teaching, the teaching is mysterious (unknown).

When teachers can understand or explain a specific instructional strategy, but lack the ability to perform it, their understanding is theoretical (unable to demonstrate). For instance, teachers may be able to explain what an inquiry lesson should be like but cannot implement such a lesson.

Conversely, when teachers are able to teach in a particular way (even masterfully), but are unable to articulate their reasons for why they do so, we refer to this situation as magical (unexplained). Such teachers operate on intuition or may not remember what they figured out a long time ago. They may explain their practice in words such as, "I've been teaching for 25 years. I just teach."

When teachers know what they are teaching, why they are teaching it in particular ways for particular groups of students, what they would do differently (or keep) the next time and why, these teachers are intentional (deliberate) about their practice.

Effective mentors are deliberate in their use of various coaching approaches to enhance new teachers' intentionality and help them move toward becoming excellent teachers. Mentors consciously match their coaching approaches to the specific needs of new teachers for structure, direction, or guidance. They may employ a nondirective, a collaborative, or a direct informational approach when working with new teachers. The nondirective approach is most suited to helping new teachers "self-coach," but mentors must draw on all three approaches and choose the most appropriate for a given situation.

Consider this...

As instructional leaders, mentors use focused reflection on lesson planning, implementation, and student assessment to coach new teachers in becoming more intentional about their practice. Teachers who are intentional about their practice know what they did, why they did it, what they would do differently (or keep) the next time, and why.

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