



## Link 8.2 – Sample Coaching Session

The following narrative simulates a brief – no more than 10 minutes – coaching session between a school administrator and teacher. The 7 questions that follow, which are used in the discussion come from Michael Bungay Stanier’s book, The Coaching Habit: Say Less, Ask More & Change the Way You Lead Forever – a book specifically written for non-coaches.

1. What’s on your mind?
2. And what else?
3. What’s the real challenge for you here?
4. What do you want?
5. How can I help?
6. If you’re saying yes to this, what are you saying no to?
7. What was most useful to you?

### **Some points to consider as you read the dialogue:**

1. Where does the administrator appear to be speaking through intuition and with curiosity as opposed to promoting an answer?
2. What is important about the administrator giving the teacher time to think about their response?
3. What kind of body language might the teacher be exhibiting? How might the administrator use that information?
4. Where does the administrator make an observation in an attempt to open up the teacher?
5. At what point does the administrator provide a little direction, but not solve the teacher’s issue?
6. What kinds of questions is the administrator asking? Note, too, how they’re asking the questions.

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**Administrator**

What's on your mind today?

**Teacher**

Nothing really. Things are going pretty well.

**Administrator**

Yeah? What are you pleased with?

(pause)

**Teacher**

Um, parent-teacher conferences went OK, I guess.

**Administrator**

What else?

**Teacher**

I thought the faculty meeting was good. Nice and short!

**Administrator**

What else?

**Teacher**

Our grade-level team is meeting, but...

(pause)

**Administrator**

But...

**Teacher**

I don't know.

(pause)

**Teacher**

We're.... I'm....we're feeling frustrated, I guess.

**Administrator**

What about?

**Teacher**

This idea of the kids owning more of their own learning. Not sure how to do that.

**Administrator**

What have you tried?

**Teacher**

Um, I've asked them what they would like to study.

**Administrator**

And how have they responded?

**Teacher**

Crickets!

**Administrator**

Ah! What do you think that's about?

**Teacher**

They're kids, they don't want to study *anything*!

**Administrator**

Let's say for a minute that that's true. I'm curious if there's another way to engage them?

**Teacher**

What do you mean?

**Administrator**

How might you ask the question differently?

(pause)

**Teacher**

I'm not sure.

**Administrator**

Ok to make an observation?

**Teacher**

I'm all ears.

**Administrator**

“What would you like to study?” may sound a bit like *traditional* school work. What’s a different approach that avoids that connotation? And I don’t have an answer here, by the way.

(pause)

**Teacher**

I guess I could ask them what they’re interested in.

**Administrator**

What do you like about that question?

**Teacher**

It puts more of the inquiry on them and less on studying.

**Administrator**

Anything else you might try?

(pause)

**Teacher**

I’m not sure.

(pause)

**Teacher**

I can’t think of anything else.

**Administrator**

Let me ask you this: how do you feel about this whole student-led learning initiative?

**Teacher**

It’s OK, I guess.

(pause)

**Administrator**

I sense maybe there’s a challenge for you here that goes beyond not knowing how to approach the kids.

(pause)

**Teacher**

I guess I don't know what it means for me as the teacher. What's my role?

**Administrator**

Ah, OK. What do you really want here as a teacher?

(pause)

**Teacher**

I...

(pause)

**Teacher**

If I'm teaching less...what's my role?

**Administrator**

Got it. How can I help you here?

**Teacher**

Clarify how my role changes if we want the kids to own their learning.

**Administrator**

OK. Here's how I see it. In the past, teachers were responsible for conveying information – information that we hoped would become student knowledge. But if we want kids to be excited and own their own learning, the teacher's role has to shift. We have to become a vehicle for opening up students' curiosity and unleashing their creativity. How might you do that?

(pause)

**Teacher**

I'm not sure.

**Administrator**

OK, but let me ask you this first: How would you feel as a teacher if you *could* unleash curiosity and creativity on the part of your students?

(pause)

**Teacher**

I'd feel pretty good....

**Administrator**

Because . . . .

(pause)

**Teacher**

Because . . . I still have an important role.

**Administrator**

Good. So experiment a bit. There's no road map here. Maybe think what would energize you if the tables were turned and *you* were the student.

**Teacher**

I can do that.

**Administrator**

If you're saying "Yes" to experimentation, what are you saying "no" too?

**Teacher**

My old role?

**Administrator**

OK! Hey, what was most helpful for you today?

**Teacher**

Acknowledging that there's no one way to do this. Ha, I just thought of this: giving me the freedom to experiment is like giving the kids the freedom to explore their interests..

**Administrator**

Beautiful. Let me know how it goes.

**Teacher**

Will do.