

Mission Moment: Coaching for Success



Jennifer is a psychologist at Milwaukee Public Schools. At the Foundation's 2024 Gala, she explained the many benefits of the Coaching for Success program.

Jennifer

Coaching for Success was the opportunity that challenged my cohort of diverse supportive roles in the education setting to build connections and take a different approach. Our phenomenal instructors from Rogers Behavioral Health, our lead coaches, not only taught, but modeled transformational skills. They demonstrated how to nurture and tend to the needs of our teachers - the front lines of our schools - as we sought to support them in their efforts to integrate social emotional learning and trauma informed practices into their classes and spheres of influence.

My role as a coach was to help teachers seek connections and purpose in everyday life with a strengths-based approach, holding space to simply listen and affirm their voices. By asking the right questions at the right time, reflecting, problem-solving, and action planning, I saw great

things began to happen. The teachers I coached experienced a boost in their confidence, abilities, choices, and personal toolkits as well as a shift in the importance of their self-care and overall well-being.

There were also unimaginable outcomes with students. I witnessed warm spaces evolve into safer and more equitable environments, full of high support met with high accountability. Here, teachers intentionally educated youth to redefine their idea of success. The students began recognizing their barriers and disadvantages, leaning into their unique strengths that are often overlooked and unidentified, and exploring their resilient journeys together. All the while, teachers were actively promoting the importance of self-awareness, self-regulation, self-care, and self-love.

Before long, classrooms turned into spaces that served as alternative, therapeutic settings for a lot of our students who face barriers to accessing mental health supports, whether due to stigma, lack of cultural competency, language barriers, or limited means.

Today, our work continues in a number of ways. As a cohort, we continue to connect through a community of practice to further our skills. We have also extended the coaching model to our psychology department in an effort to grow the program internally. And personally, I continue to listen.

As Dr. Rachel Naomi Remen states, "A loving silence often has more power to heal and connect than the most well-intentioned words."