

Coaching to Empower Teachers: An Introduction to Instructional Coaching











Improving Teacher Performance Through Instructional Coaching

What is instructional coaching?

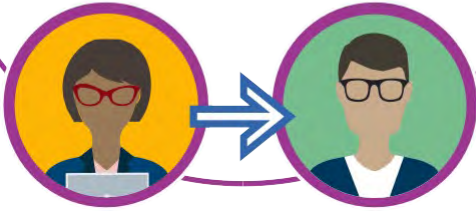
Instructional coaching is job-embedded professional learning that focuses both on content and practice — not just one or the other.¹ As instructional coaches work with teachers, they serve as thought partners, guides, and support for the process of experimenting, reflecting, and improving. Professional learning activities such as instructional coaching can affect student achievement by enhancing teachers' knowledge and skills in order to positively impact their instruction and student learning.²



Instructional coaching is:

-  a kind of professional learning that happens consistently and in the context of the classroom.
-  a partnership with teachers to support them as they improve their instruction so that students are more successful in their learning.
-  when evidence-based practices are brought into classrooms and teachers or other school leaders work, over time, to implement these practices.
-  an extension of previous training a teacher has received.
-  based on collaborative efforts to develop self-reflection and self-sufficiency.
-  ongoing and evolving over time into a continuum of support as teachers demonstrate new skills and data supports increased student learning.
-  continuously evaluated for effectiveness and efficiency.
-  focused on an individual or group.³

How does instructional coaching contribute to the transfer of training?



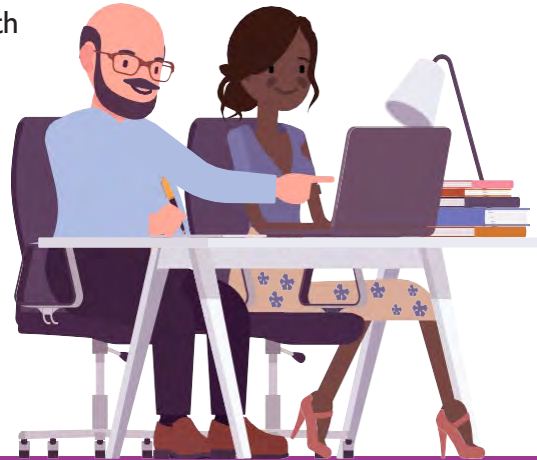
In the 1970s, evaluations of professional development that focused on teaching strategies and curriculum revealed that as few as 10 percent of the participants implemented what they had learned. Well-researched curriculum and teaching models did not find their way into general practice and thus could not influence students' learning environments. However, through implementing seminars and coaching sessions, results were consistent: implementation rose dramatically. Thus we recommended that teachers who were studying teaching and curriculum form small coaching groups that would share the learning process. In this way professional development might directly affect student learning.

— Joyce & Showers⁴

Instructional coaching can take the form of:



Observational coaching, which includes a partner teacher working with a coach so that they can observe and try new strategies and procedures with their own students and get in-the-moment feedback.⁵



Side-by-side coaching, which provides an opportunity for coaches and teachers to learn together by reflecting on the teacher's instruction and co-developing approaches to solve problems.⁶

How does instructional coaching support teacher instruction and student learning?

Coached teachers:



practice new strategies more often and with greater skill.



adapt strategies more appropriately to their own goals and contexts.



demonstrate a clearer understanding of the purposes and use of the new strategies.



retain and increase their skill over time.



are more likely to explain new models of teaching to ensure students' understanding of the models' strategy and purpose.⁸

The strongest coaching programs:



use well-trained, expert coaches.



emphasize strategies to improve student engagement.



include structured feedback.



take more than one year to produce an impact.⁷

The Impact Cycle⁹

The Impact Cycle is a process coaches can use to partner with teachers to help them have a positive impact on students' learning and wellbeing, with the three stages of the cycle being central to coaching.



Step 2: Learn:

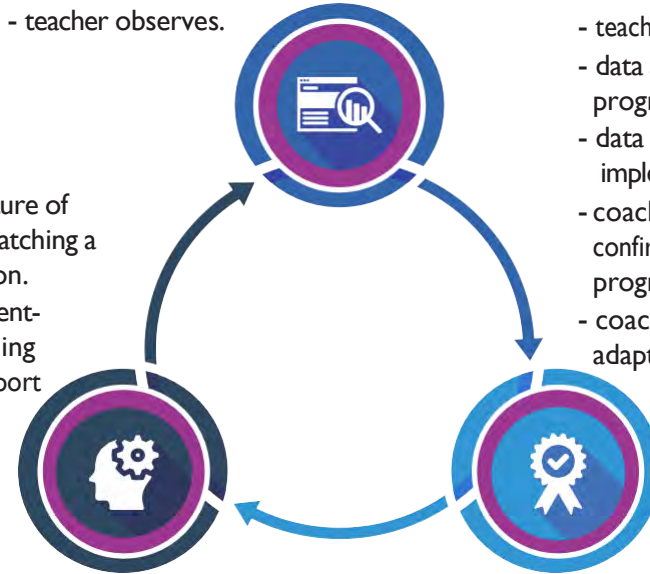
- coach shares different teaching strategies.
- coach prompts teacher to modify practice if appropriate.
- coach provides modeling.
- teacher observes.

Step 3: Improve:

- teacher implements practice.
- data are gathered on student progress.
- data are gathered on teacher's implementation of the process.
- coach and teacher meet to confirm direction and monitor progress.
- coach and teacher make adaptations and plan next actions.

Step 1: Identify:

- teacher gets a clear picture of the present reality by watching a video of their instruction.
- teacher identifies a student-focused goal and teaching strategy to use, with support from the coach.



Instructional Coaching Roles and Responsibilities



The teacher's role is to identify learning goals, provide data, consistently integrate new practices, invite feedback, meet with the coach weekly to reflect, and ask questions.¹⁰



The coach's role is to enroll teachers, gather and analyze data with teachers to create goals, listen and ask questions, explain teaching practices, find resources, provide feedback, and serve as a thought partner.¹¹



The administrator's role is to create a coaching culture for their school and to ensure that policies and systems are in place to support data-driven conversations by finding ways to build interpersonal relationships of trust between teachers, leaders, and coaches to improve instruction.¹²

Resources:

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Tools *for* Learning Schools

Every Educator engages in Effective Professional Learning Every day So Every Student Achieves

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Teacher-Coach Relationships

An excerpt from *Coaching Matters*

By Joellen Killion, Cindy Harrison, Chris Bryan, and Heather Clifton

In any professional learning program, teachers and coaches must have a good relationship in order to get the work done.

To have a productive relationship, teachers and coaches need to trust one another, respect each other professionally, commit to keeping their partnership agreements, and clearly define the work they will do together. Teachers must believe that the coach supports them and that the coach's top priority is student academic achievement. The coach must believe that teachers are committed to continuous improvement and that teachers' top priority is student academic achievement. The mutual respect and professional focus of the coach-teacher relationship minimizes personal factors that may detract from a productive relationship.

Build Relationships With Teachers

Building strong, productive relationships with teachers requires six key elements:

- Creating effective partnership agreements;
- Building teacher leadership capacity;
- Communicating about coaching services;
- Allowing teachers to identify their needs and to choose how a coach provides support (allowing teachers "a voice and a choice");
- Encouraging feedback; and
- Managing resistance and conflict.



Creating Effective Agreements

To have a constructive and productive relationship, teachers and coaches agree in advance on how they will work together and the kind of work they will do. An agreement reduces teachers' anxiety about what the coaching experience is and creates a foundation for a trusting relationship.

A coach may want a partnership agreement with individual teachers and with teams of teachers. Partnership agreements often describe each party's roles and responsibilities, outline desired outcomes for the work, define how the work will be measured, specify what data the coach and teacher will examine and how they will follow up, describe what the coach and the teacher need from one another to be successful, tell how they will interact with one another, and spell out what is confidential.

One of the most important aspects of partnership-agreement conversations teachers and coaches have is about

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what confidentiality means in their relationship. The coach is more likely to be able to establish trust and gain teachers' confidence if everyone explicitly understands that the coach's work does not influence the principal's evaluation of teachers in any way or affect the principal's regard for the teachers. If teachers think the coach tells the principal about their practices, they are less inclined to want to work

Learning Forward BELIEF

More students achieve when educators assume collective responsibility for student learning.

with the coach or to see the coach as a support. Coaches and teachers can negotiate what is permissible to share with other teachers or the administrator.

An astute coach discusses the bounds of confidentiality with administrators as well as with teachers when establishing partnership agreements. Conversations about partnership agreements allow teachers to share how they might work most effectively with the coach and what specific needs they have. The coach may want to use an agenda or conversation map to focus the conversation.

A summary

restatement ending the conversation ensures that the teacher and coach agree on the specifics of the working relationship.

Usually both the parties write and sign the partnership agreement, but the agreement also can be less formal, such as having one person, usually the coach, take notes during the conversation and copy the notes for the other person.

Partnership agreements are not stagnant — they evolve as the relationship between the coach and teacher evolves. Early on, when the coach and teacher are more tentative about the relationship, the agreements are clear and explicit. As the relationship matures and becomes more focused, businesslike, and intentional, the agreements, while never ignored, may require less focus.

Building Teacher Leadership Capacity

One indicator that coaching is effective is when teacher leadership grows. Coaches are not the only teacher leaders at a school site. Coaches who see it as their responsibility to develop teacher leadership send the message that all teachers have leadership potential and responsibilities. These coaches see themselves as models of leadership practices and make their practices transparent so that other teachers can learn to coach. Teachers are more engaged when coaches demonstrate respect for teachers' knowledge and practices.

Coaches can foster teacher leadership in many ways. Coaches can:

- Invite other teachers to facilitate a team meeting, and guide and support novice facilitators.
- Seek other teachers' support with complex challenges related to student learning and teaching.
- Invite teachers to add resources, examples, models, or

ideas to conversations.

- Invite teachers to discuss their instructional decisions so that others understand the theoretical, research, or contextual rationale for the decision.
- Use reflection protocols to foster reflection.
- Encourage teachers to present in critical friends' groups.
- Encourage teachers to facilitate professional development for their peers.
- Provide professional development in teacher leadership skills for interested teachers.
- Coach team, grade-level, or department chairs on their leadership skills.
- Share practices or resources with designated teacher leaders or those who want to develop their leadership capacity.
- Pair teachers as peer observers to provide each other feedback.
- Engage teachers in walk-throughs or instructional rounds to gather data about teaching and learning, and participate in debriefing sessions.
- Invite teachers to serve as hosts for walk-throughs or instructional rounds.
- Encourage teachers to open their classrooms to other teachers to visit.

Some teachers hesitate to take leadership roles, seeing the challenge as adding responsibilities to their regular work. Others consider leadership responsibilities only as a track to school administration. However, schools today have enough leadership opportunities and forms of leadership to allow just about any interested teacher to lead in some way. Coaches also can help create leadership opportunities for teachers who prefer to remain in the classroom.

To build teachers' confidence as they step into leadership roles, coaches apply the same gradual-release principle they use in coaching instruction to build leadership expertise — I do, we do, you do. As teachers gain confidence, they can gradually assume some of the coach's responsibilities so that eventually the coach can shift responsibilities or assume new ones. Other teacher leaders can take over roles including data coach, learning facilitator, instructional specialist, and more. When teacher leaders are active within a school and assume leadership responsibilities, their sense of collegiality is stronger, they feel more engaged and professional, and they have a greater effect on student achievement.

Coaching is most successful when instruction improves, student learning increases — and more teachers see themselves as leaders and contributors to the professionalism within their schools.

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Communicating About Coaching Services

Coaches can encourage teachers to participate in coaching by communicating which coaching services are offered. What the coach can provide, and the coach's availability depend on the coaching program's goals and parameters.

For example, if a district has determined that its coaches will serve as data coaches, instructional and curriculum specialists, and learning facilitators, the coach will need to provide services associated with those roles. So, a data coach would meet with teachers individually or in teams to analyze student data and also might help the principal facilitate whole-school faculty meetings to review data about student achievement, engagement, demographics, perceptions, and so on. Some coaches have surveyed staff and then outlined services that respond to teacher needs.

Coaches have different ways of letting teachers know what support is available. Some coaches have created electronic or print menus listing the coach's support options. Others have created one-page descriptions or brochures. Some approaches are creative; others are more straightforward. The form of the communication sends a message about how the coach intends teachers to view coaching.

In almost all of these communication tools, coaches include details such as how to connect with the coach and the best way, whether by email, a note in the coach's mailbox, or with a phone message. Written or electronic formats generally include a place for the teacher's name and a spot to check off the requested service. These communication tools help a coach prepare and be ready to focus when working with teachers. Teachers then can consider in advance how to benefit from the coach's support, which increases their engagement, intentionality, and, potentially, the results.

In addition to communicating the services they offer, coaches periodically report to the staff, principals, and the coach champion which services they have provided. Most coaching programs require coaches to complete some form of log that the coaching program director and school principal use to manage the program.

Teachers often wonder how coaches spend their time when the coach is not with a particular team or individual teacher. To keep teachers informed, coaches can create a summary to share with all staff — a circle graph of how the coach's time is allocated or a description of the amount of time the coach spent in various services. The data can be pulled easily from the coach's log. The summary could be included in the staff newsletter, shared in a faculty meeting or school leadership team meeting, or posted on the faculty Web page. By seeing this information, teachers may get ideas about how to benefit from coaching services in the future.

Coaching matters

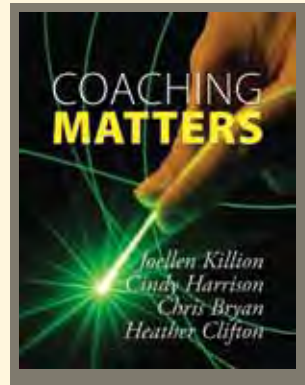
Joellen Killion, Cindy Harrison, Chris Bryan, Heather Clifton

This article is excerpted from *Coaching Matters* (Learning Forward, 2012). Each chapter describes an element of research and the authors' firsthand experiences in making coaching effective.

Every chapter is accompanied by tools, including extended readings, resources to use with teachers, strategies for accomplishing the work, and real-life examples to build on.

Available at store.learningforward.org

Product Code B542. Member price: \$36.



Allowing Teachers a Voice and Choice

Teachers can't be forced to engage in coaching. A more positive approach is to set clear expectations and allow teachers to identify their needs and choose the services the coach provides and the focus of the coach-teacher interaction. Giving teachers a voice and choice empowers and respects the voice of teachers (Knight, 2007). Choice means believing "that teachers should have choice regarding what and how they learn" (Knight, 2007, p. 41).

When teachers are respected and given choice in their professional learning and the professional learning the coach provides aligns more closely with teachers' unique needs, teachers are more likely to perceive value in the coaching and apply what they learn from the coach.

As principals convey expectations about coaching, it is important that they expect that teachers take an active role in the coaching process by clarifying the specific type of support they want and their goal for the coaching interaction.

The coach's role is to create a trusting, collaborative relationship with teachers to make the process inviting, to listen deeply, to seek to understand teachers' needs, and to support them in meeting their individual, team, school, and district goals.

Reference

Knight, J. (2007). *Instructional coaching: A partnership approach to improving instruction*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press. ●

Sample Partnership Agreement Between Instructional Coach and Teacher

Coaches can define the bounds of their professional relationships by establishing partnership agreements. Use this tool to create an agreement between a coach and a teacher that defines their working relationship and expectations for the coach’s work.

Basic Agreements	Design Issues
What are your worst fears and best hopes for our work together?	How will we know about student achievement in your classroom? What data will we collect?
<p><i>Teacher:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I am afraid that you will judge my teaching to be less than satisfactory. • I am afraid that having you in my classroom will distract the students. • I hope that our work together will make a difference for my students. • I am hoping that I will learn many new things. <p><i>Coach:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I am afraid I won’t be able to help you enough to see a difference in student achievement. • I hope you will see me as a peer. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will plan an entire unit together, examine student work along the way and evaluate the results of the final assessment. • We need to know what skills students are starting with in relation to the unit being taught.
How do you want me to interact with you?	How and when will we co-plan and teach?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will communicate by email. • We will each have a copy of all of our joint work. • We will be totally confidential as far as any evaluative comments we may make about each other’s work. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will meet Wednesday to plan the lesson. We will each need to bring our materials with us. • We will start teaching this unit the next Monday.
What resources and materials will we need?	How can we implement demonstration lessons/co-teaching/visits with feedback in your classroom?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher will bring curriculum guide and pacing chart. • Coach will bring additional books that we could use for reading aloud during the unit. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will start this unit with the coach modeling the first read aloud lesson. Then we will co-teach during the first week. By the end of week 2, the teacher will teach a lesson incorporating a read aloud with a focus on the English language learner students.
Where do we want to start in your classroom? What are our priorities?	Where do we want to start in your classroom? What are our priorities?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our priorities are to master using reading aloud as part of our reading mini-lessons. We also want to integrate reading into all the content areas.

Source: *Taking the lead: New roles for teachers and school-based coaches*, by Joellen Killion and Cindy Harrison. Oxford, OH: National Staff Development Council, 2006.

Handout #3 Sample Teacher-Coach Partnership Agreement

Partner A – You are a second-year teacher who struggles with effective Tier 1 instruction. You are nervous about seeking help from a coach.

Partner B – You are the coach meeting with this teacher to discuss your work together.

Using the sample below as a guide, role play how your initial conversation might go and begin to create your partnership agreement!

Basic Agreements	Design Issues
What are your worst fears and best hopes for our work together?	How will we know about student achievement in your classroom? What data will we collect?
How do you want me to interact with you?	How and when will we co-plan and teach?
What resources and materials will we need?	How can we implement demonstration lessons/co-teaching/visits with feedback in your classroom?
	Where do we want to start in your classroom? What are our priorities?



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Coaches can:

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- Use reflection protocols to foster reflection.
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- Encourage teachers to facilitate professional development for their peers.
- Provide professional development in teacher leadership skills for interested teachers.
- Coach team, grade-level, or department chairs on their leadership skills.
- Share practices or resources with designated teacher leaders or those who want to develop their leadership capacity.
- Pair teachers as peer observers to provide each other feedback.
- Engage teachers in walk-throughs or instructional rounds to gather data about teaching and learning and participate in debriefing sessions.
- Invite teachers to serve as hosts for walk-throughs or instructional rounds.
- Encourage teachers to open their classrooms to other teachers to visit.”

from Handout #2, p.2

Ms. Morris is a grade 2 teacher who has been teaching for 15 years. When the B.E.S.T. ELA Standards were adopted, she was one of the first teachers in the building to dive in and has developed a strong understanding of them. You notice during collaborative planning that she has great insight when selecting appropriate text for a lesson and developing tasks that are aligned to the rigor of the benchmark. Her classroom data shows that most of her students have showed significant growth in comprehension on PM 2. However, she seems hesitant to speak up and share her thoughts with the team. She isn’t confident with the new technology the team discusses during planning and therefore does not always feel as if her insights are relevant.

- What is this teacher’s area of strength?
- What is this teacher’s personality?
- How can I merge strength and personality to build leadership capacity?
- What support does this teacher need from me to grow?



Sample Communications

Dear Truman Elementary Staff,

My name is Janine Santiago, and I am so excited to be serving as the new Truman Elementary Literacy Coach. My family and I have recently moved from Ohio where I served as a K-5 Reading Interventionist. I look forward to getting to know each one of you as we work together this year to see our students thrive!

Coaching and supporting teachers is my passion because I believe that everyone deserves the opportunity to grow their practice through coaching services. Below are some ways we might work together:

- Co-planning standards-based lessons
- Nonevaluative observation with feedback and reflection
- Exploring resources and curriculum
- Scheduling your literacy block
- Examining student work samples to make instructional decisions
- Diving into upcoming benchmarks to deepen understanding
- Examining student data and creating next steps
- Listening and brainstorming to solve problems

I would love to talk with you more about these opportunities to see which one might be the right fit for you as you begin a new school year. Feel free to reach out to me via email at santiagoj@lssd.edu or stop by my office for a brief chat. I look forward to our work together this year!

Your coach,
Janine

Everyone Deserves a Coach!

Have you been looking for a way to improve your teaching and see your students soar? Are you ready to take the next step in your teaching career? You are ready for a coach! Let's work together to determine what your goals are this year and steps we can take to help you reach these goals. Here are just a few of the coaching services available to support you:

- | | |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| ✓ Co-planning lessons | ✓ Modeling instructional strategies |
| ✓ Researching strategies | ✓ Classroom visits with debrief |
| ✓ Reviewing student work | ✓ And more! |
| ✓ Analyzing data for next steps | |

I would love to talk with you more about how coaching can take your teaching to the next level. Please fill out this slip and drop it into my box. I'll reach out to you within 24 hours to begin our work together!

Name: _____ Best time to contact you: _____

Contact Information (email or phone): _____

Sample Communications



Coaching MENU

<p>CLASSROOM VISIT</p> <p>If you'd like feedback for growth on a lesson, we can schedule a time that I can come and watch you teach!</p>	<p>CO-TEACHING</p> <p>Teaching together can be so much fun! After planning cooperatively, we can teach a lesson together.</p>	<p>DATA CHATS</p> <p>You have all this data on your students, but now what? Let's meet to look at student data together. We can figure out what it means for your students and what to do next.</p>
<p>MODEL LESSONS</p> <p>Need to see something in action? Let me teach a lesson in your classroom while you observe me.</p>	<p>PLANNING SUPPORT</p> <p>Do you want to have a more detailed and specific idea of your lessons than what is typed up in Collaborative Planning? We can dive deep into a single lesson, a week, or an entire unit.</p>	<p>PROFESSIONAL LEARNING</p> <p>Do you want to learn more about a specific topic? Let's set up a PL time to get you the support that you need!</p>
<p>RESOURCE RECOMMENDATIONS</p> <p>Are you interested in resources on a specific topic, but don't have time to hunt for those hard-to-find lesson components and ideas? Let me help!</p>	<p>TEACHER TALKS</p> <p>Do you just need to chat? I can lend an open and confidential ear to discuss anything you want.</p>	<p>VISIT A COLLEAGUE</p> <p>Do you want to see your colleagues teach? Let's set up a date and time to observe them and discuss what you are interested in implementing in your classroom.</p>

WALKTHROUGH CHAT: Would you like to debrief on the lesson you taught while I was walking through your classroom? We can chat about all the awesome aspects of your lesson and collaborate to determine next steps to take things up another notch!

I'm here to support you!
Scan this QR code to book a time to collaborate with me!
Love, your Reading Coach, Glenn ❤️



Drafting My Communication

Type of communication I want to create:

How I will ask the teachers to contact me:

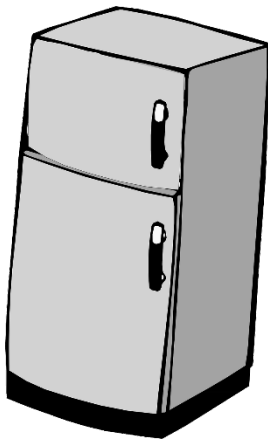
Supports I will offer:

Draft or sketch of my communication:





What idea do you want to pack up and take away to implement from this session?



What idea from this session do you want to put on hold to think more about?



What misconceptions about coaching did you have that you want to throw away after this session?