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Professional Coaching: Part 2: Instructional Coaching

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Professional Coaching:
Instructional Coaching
By Sally Jessup

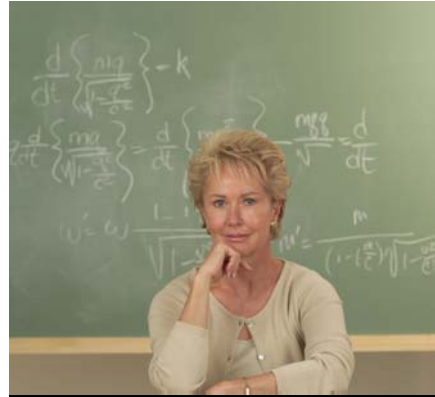
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Instructional Coaching

Just as the role of the principal is changing from one of manager to one of instructional leader, so is the role of teacher changing. “Most teachers (are being asked to rethink their own practice, to construct new classroom roles and expectations about student outcomes, and to teach in ways they have never taught before—and probably never experienced as students” (Nelson & Hammerman qtd. in Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin 1995). By providing teachers with instructional coaches, the teachers can focus on developing these new research-based skills as they engage in ongoing discussions with their peers about student work and effective instructional strategies. Therefore, instructional coaches serve an important function in the continued professional

growth of educators who are already in the field.

In doing this, the instructional coaches do not play the role of sage on the stage.



“...Most teachers (are being asked) to rethink their own practice, to construct new classroom roles and expectations about student outcomes, and to teach in ways they have never taught before—and probably never experienced as students” (Nelson & Hammerman qtd. in Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin 1995).

As with all coaching, instructional coaching is learner-centered. The coach is there to support the learners’ needs and goals by working “with teachers to help them incorporate research-based instructional practices. When working with students, they do so with the primary goal of demonstrating new effective practices to

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teachers” (Knight 2007). The instructional coaches’ focus is always on helping teachers develop their instructional expertise. To do this, instructional coaches are “skilled at (collaboratively) unpacking their clients’ goals so that they can help them create a plan for realizing their professional goals...(and) they have excellent communication skills...(that enable them to)...empathize, listen, and build relationships and trust...(In addition, they) are skilled facilitating teachers reflection about classroom practices...(and know)...a large number of scientifically proven strategies...(that)...help students learn more effectively” (Knight 2007).

This learner-centered approach increases teacher self-confidence and makes a huge difference in the teachers’ willingness to try new things. When Boston Public Schools

analyzed coaching’s effectiveness, they found that “the ongoing, in-house professional development that... coaches provided teachers— modeling classroom teaching strategies, spearheading collaborative engagement in evaluating student work, connecting staff to the most recent research on best practice—turned out to be an invaluable tool in the district’s commitment to improve student achievement” (Guitiney 2001). The reason for this is apparent; instructional coaches work at multiple levels within the building and sometimes at multiple levels across the district.

Coaching’s impact is felt everywhere. Edwards and Newton analyzed research and found that coaching was reported to have had a positive influence on teacher efficacy. This is important because

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teacher efficacy has an impact on student achievement.

The level of teacher efficacy has an impact on student achievement.



In fact, the research indicated that “high personal teaching efficacy correlated with student gains in reading achievement” (Armor, Conroy-Oseguera, Cox, King, McDonnell, Pascal, Pauly, & Zellman, 1976; Tracz & Gibson, 1986; in Edwards & Newton 1995) and with



“achievement in language and mathematics” (Tracz &

Gibson, 1986 in Edwards & Newton 1995).

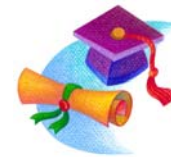
In addition, “teacher efficacy in the middle school correlated

significantly with teacher enthusiasm and higher grades for students” (Newman, 1993 Edward & Newton 1995).

In addition, research pointed out that, “teachers with low levels of efficacy were more likely to



refer students from low-SES families to special education than teachers with higher levels of efficacy” (Podell & Soodak, 1993 in Edwards & Newton). In short, the research supported the conclusion that “high teacher efficacy is linked with overall school effectiveness



(Brookover & Pazotte, 1979 in Edwards & Newton 1995).

By focusing on the teachers’ needs, coaching provides teachers with the continual job-embedded support that they need as they reflect on their own practices and move forward

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in new ways. By providing this support to teachers, they begin to see that their actions do count. This leads them to be more willing to try new things and to implement new research-based teaching strategies.

All of this increases the school's collective efficacy which is described as the "faculty's belief in its collective ability to carry out teaching tasks that promote student achievement" (Adams & Forsyth, February 2006).



Thus coaching not only increases an individual teacher's content expertise, it also increases the teacher's self-confidence and willingness to use those skills to increase student learning. When all the individual teachers in a school begin to feel this way, the whole

school experiences an increase in its collective efficacy which can lead to greater student achievement (Goddard et al. 2000; Goddard 2001; Goddard et al. 2003; Hoy et al. 2003; Ross et al. 2003 in Adams & Forsyth, February 2006). Thus instructional coaching is an indispensable tool in our quest to raise student achievement.

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