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Instructional Coaching: Improving Student Achievement and Building Teacher Efficacy

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INSTRUCTIONAL COACHING:

IMPROVING STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT AND BUILDING TEACHER EFFICACY

A Project

Presented to

The Graduate Faculty

Central Washington University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Education

Master Teacher

by

Rebecca J. Tonseth

May 2010

ABSTRACT

INSTRUCTIONAL COACHING:

IMPROVING STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT AND BUILDING TEACHER EFFICACY

by

Rebecca J. Tonseth

May 2010

The purpose of this project was to justify the author's job as an instructional coach. The author was motivated by her own need to discover what an instructional coach was and how an instructional coach positively affects teacher instruction and student achievement. This project includes ideas and tools that beginning instructional coaches can use with teachers in an elementary school setting. A review of the literature was included on the effects of coaching on teacher efficacy and the effects teachers and coaches have on student achievement. This project examined the roles of the instructional coach and it provides a guide that will aid them in their work with elementary teachers. The purpose of this project was also to provide background information on the importance of coaching for professional development and to identify how teachers can utilize coaches to improve classroom instruction. A coaching cookbook was included for beginning coaches to use as they begin working with teachers. The cookbook contains "recipes" for instructional coaches to use and adapt to promote an atmosphere of professional learning based on the needs of the teachers and students with whom they are working.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

There is a growing interest in a new form of professional learning and/or development described as instructional coaching. Poglinco, Bach, Hovde, Rosenblum, Saunders, and Supovitz (2003) define instructional coaching as a “form of inquiry-based learning characterized by collaboration between individuals, or groups of, teachers and more accomplished peers. Coaching involves ongoing classroom modeling, supportive critiques of practice, and specific observations” (p. 1). Instructional coaching offers authentic opportunities for professional learning versus the traditional one-shot workshops. Greene (2004) says, “Instructional coaches observe teachers and provide feedback, provide demonstration lessons that include time for planning, debriefing after the lesson, and co-teaching which also includes planning the lesson itself and debriefing” (p. 3). Educational leaders are seeking coaching as a way to move schools forward by providing individualized and differentiated learning opportunities for teachers. Instructional coaches focus on refining and honing teaching (Killion, 2009).

The use of instructional coaches in an educational setting is a growing trend. School districts, with the need to improve standardized test scores and achieve Annual Yearly Progress (AYP), are seeking efficient ways to improve student achievement. Districts agree that student progress is greatly impacted by the classroom teachers (Simeral, 2008). Therefore, if districts can attain highly efficient, qualified, and purposeful teachers, students will be directly affected and test scores will increase (Goddard, Hoy, & Hoy, 2000; Rivkin, Hanushek, & Kain, 2005;

Simeral, 2008). The problem is how to establish an environment where teachers can plan, share, and reflect on their teaching practices to best meet the needs of their students.

Teachers know from experience that strictly teaching the curriculum is not going to meet the needs of every student in their classrooms. The role of an instructional coach is to create conditions and conversations where teachers can get the support they need to be continuously effective in their teaching (Allen, 2006). "Coaching provides a model of respectful collegial reflection about instructional decisions. The benefits are seen in student learning gains, increased teacher efficacy, and increased satisfaction with one's work and the collaborative culture found in the school" (Harwell-Kee, 1999, p. 28). Teachers and coaches work together to provide students opportunities for success.

In almost all professions, from professional athletes to retail store managers, there is a desire to improve and build upon the skills they currently have to attain a higher performance level. In schools and districts that are seeking ways to increase student performance, the role of a school-based coach is to address the weakness of professional development and to improve teacher and student learning (Killion & Harrison, 2006). Although research on the direct impact of coaching is limited, the best known studies that support coaching were conducted by Bruce Joyce and Beverly Showers (Killion & Harrison, 2006).

Joyce and Shower's initial study began in 1980, and their subsequent studies have also confirmed their hypothesis that teachers' use of new instructional strategies, presented through staff development, increased when peer coaching sessions occurred (Killion &

Harrison, 2006). These studies were spurred by evaluations conducted in the 1970s on staff development that revealed as few as 10 percent of the participants actually implemented what they had learned into general practice (Joyce & Showers, 1996). Joyce and Showers (1996) concluded that for student learning to be directly affected, teachers needed regular opportunities to practice and implement the content they were learning through professional development seminars. In studying how teachers can create better learning environments for themselves Joyce and Showers (1996) noted that, “Successful peer coaching teams developed skills in collaboration and enjoyed the experience so much that they wanted to continue their collegial partnerships after they accomplished their initial goals” (p. 12). Teachers who developed this type of coaching relationship – that is, who shared aspects of teaching, planned together, and pooled their experiences – practiced new skills and strategies more frequently than teachers who worked alone (Joyce & Showers, 1996). Joyce and Showers’ research recognized the need for schools to establish a staff development program that results in a collaborative, supportive environment for change and a culture that facilitates new learning and skills for teachers and increased knowledge for students.

School systems are now introducing coaching programs that provide high-quality professional learning opportunities versus the one-shot training opportunities. Lieberman (1995) suggests that the traditional view of staff development needs radical rethinking. Teachers are often asked to participate in as many as seven in-service training days during the school year where they receive direct instruction on the latest ideas (e.g., new math standards, new forms of assessment) and then are asked to implement these ideas with little feedback or

follow-up. “If reform plans are to be made operational – thus enabling teachers to really change the way they work – then teachers must have opportunities to discuss, think about, try out, and hone new practices. This means they must be involved in learning about, developing, and using new ideas with their students” (Lieberman, 1995, p. 642). Cornett and Knight (2009) concluded that for teachers to successfully implement skills gained in workshops there needs to be some coaching follow-up to insure implementation.

Purpose

The purpose of this project was to determine the job and the roles of an instructional coach as well as to determine if coaches are positive contributors to improving teachers’ instructional practice. This project acknowledges coaching’s effect on teacher efficacy. In doing so, it also acknowledges coaching’s positive effect on increasing student learning. Although there are various models of coaching in education, the purpose of this paper is to give beginning coaches the background knowledge and key components to create a successful coaching environment within an elementary school setting. This paper will describe common roles of an instructional coach and provide beginning coaches with ideas on how to effectively work with teachers to increase the implementation of “best practices” that will support student achievement.

Scope

To gain an understanding of the importance of coaches within education, the author of this paper describes 10 roles a coach may utilize and how these roles specifically impact

teaching and student learning. Research is also included on the potential impact coaches have on teachers through job-embedded professional development opportunities. It is the author's hope to connect the improvement of teaching practices through coaching to gains in student achievement. This paper is designed to give beginning coaches a starting point for determining what kind of coaching best fits their schools', teachers', and students', needs.

Limitations

A limitation of this project is that there has not been enough research done on the impact of coaches on student achievement. Research has demonstrated teachers effect on student learning and there is growing evidence on the impact of coaching on teacher efficacy, but more research needs to be conducted to connect instructional coaching to student success. With the limited empirical studies done on coaches' impact on student achievement, the use and complete "buy in" of the instructional coaching model as a way to improve student test scores may not be forth coming. Another limitation to this project is that is it designed for use in elementary schools and not middle schools or high schools, although coaches are also used at those grade levels. Yet another limitation is the many different names, purposes, and functions school systems and states use to describe coaching. There is not one set title or job description for people who are in the position of a teacher to teachers.

Definitions of Terms

Efficacy - is an internally held sense that one has the knowledge and skills to impact the learning processes in the school to attain desired results (Ellison & Hayes, 2009)

Instructional Coach - provides intensive, differentiated support to teachers so that they are able to implement proven practices (Knight, 2007)

IRA - International Reading Association

Professional Development (PD) - means a comprehensive, sustained, and intensive approach to improving teachers' and principals' effectiveness in raising student achievement (NSDC, 2010).

Professional Learning Community (PLC) – Professional Learning Communities are made up of teachers and administrators who continuously seek and share learning, and act on their learning. The goal of their actions is to enhance their effectiveness as professionals for the students benefit (Hord, 1997).

Student Focused Coaching (SFC) - a coaching model defined as a cooperative, ideally collaborative relationship with parties mutually engaged in efforts to provide better services for students (Hasbrouck & Denton, 2007).

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

“The pressure to improve instruction in schools may be greater today than at any other time in the history of American Education” (Knight, 2007, p. 1). Schools and districts are searching for the most effective and efficient ways to raise student achievement. Instructional coaches have been introduced into school systems because the assumption is that high-quality professional learning that improves teaching practices will increase student achievement (Cornett & Knight, 2009). Alexander Russo’s rationale for school-based coaching states that conventional forms of professional development are unpopular with educators because they are led by outside experts who tell teachers what to do (as cited in Killion & Harrison, 2006, p. 13). Russo emphasizes that for professional development to be effective it must be ongoing, embedded into teachers’ classroom work with children, and professional development needs to promote collaboration and a sense of community among teachers in a school (as cited in Killion & Harrison, 2006, p. 13).

Much of the research has proved Russo’s rationale to be true. This model of coaching, as a form of site-based professional development, is an effective way to incorporate research-based instructional practices into teachers’ classroom instruction on a regular basis. Denton, Swanson, and Mathes (2007) cite the International Reading Association (IRA) which says “Coaching is usually characterized as a form of Professional Development that is individualized and sustained over time” (p.570). Although schools and districts are quickly realizing the potential effectiveness of coaching, there is still confusion as to what kind of coaching they are

adopting (Knight, 2009). For example there are Instructional Coaches, Cognitive Coaches, Reading or Literacy Coaches, Data Coaches, and Math Coaches. Coaching as a structure and support for education reform may be common between school and districts, but the conceptions of coaching varies (Swinnerton, 2007). The goal of a school-based coach is to collaborate with teachers so they can choose and implement the most effective teaching strategies to help students learn and perform more effectively.

Roles of a Coach

When schools and districts choose to use the coaching model to improve teaching and student learning it is crucial that coaches have a clear understanding of the variety of roles a coach may take. Although school-based coaching can look differently from school to school, the majority of roles a coach fulfills are similar (Killion & Harrison, 2006). Killion and Harrison (2006) have identified 10 most common roles of coaches. These roles include: (1) resource provider, (2) data coach, (3) curriculum specialist, (4) instructional specialist (5) classroom supporter, (6) learning facilitator, (7) mentor, (8) school leader, (9) catalyst for change, and (10) learner.

It is important to note that a coach may, at certain times, serve only a few of these roles. There may also be occasions when it seems as though a coach is providing all these roles at once (Killion, 2009; Killion & Harrison, 2006). Coaches must determine which roles have the most impact on teaching and student learning.

Resource Provider

Teachers will often request a coach to find or gather resources to use in the classroom that would meet the needs of a diverse group of learners. Coaches may also provide teacher resource materials that will aid teachers in developing their instructional plans (Killion, 2009; Killion & Harrison, 2006).

Data Coach

A data coach works with teachers to examine student data to design classroom instruction. Coaches help teachers use classroom data to monitor student progress to determine which students are ready to move on, who needs reteaching or additional practice, or those who need an extension (Killion, 2009; Killion & Harrison, 2006, Lipton & Wellmen, 2007).

Curriculum Specialist

The focus of this role is to concentrate on “what” is being taught, not the “how.” The coach helps a teacher understand the district adopted curriculum and how to choose instructional units based on grade level learning targets.

Instructional Specialist

Once teachers know “what” they are going to teach, a coach can help with the “how” to teach. Coaches help teachers to use a variety of instructional strategies as well as establish a safe and nurturing learning environment for all learners (Killion, 2009; Killion & Harrison, 2006).

Classroom Supporter

This role is the only one that takes place in the classroom while teaching and student learning are occurring. This is where a coach works side by side with the teacher inside the teacher's classroom engaged in modeling, co-teaching, and/or observing and providing feedback.

Coaches also participate in reflective conversations with the teacher about teaching and learning (Killion, 2009; Killion & Harrison, 2006).

Mentor

Coaches who serve as mentors usually work with new teachers or new-to-the-school teachers.

This role requires coaches to help new teachers become acquainted with the norms of the school, curriculum, and policies. Coaches may also assist beginning teachers with classroom management and refinement of instructional strategies (Killion, 2009).

Learning Facilitator

As a learning facilitator, a coach organizes, coordinates, supports, designs, or facilitates adult learning within the school. Whatever the format may be (book study, action research team, lesson study, faculty meeting) the coach starts with student achievement data and works with teachers to determine staff learning needs (Killion, 2009; Killion & Harrison, 2006).

School Leader

A coach is a school leader who supports school and district initiatives and assists teachers in implementing reform behaviors. They also serve on many building committees and model

professionalism through attitude and integrity. Coaches are promoters of a collaborative community of learners within their school (Killion, 2009; Killion & Harrison, 2006).

Catalyst for Change

Coaches serving in this role have the capacity to promote change by encouraging teachers to not be satisfied with what they are doing, but to continually strive to improve (Killion, 2009; Killion & Harrison, 2006).

Learner

As a learner, a coach must find time to develop his/her own practices. Coaches attend trainings, workshops, and problem solve with other coaches to identify areas of strength and weakness. Taking time to be reflective on their work as a coach will also guide professional development needs (Killion, 2009).

Instructional coaching encompasses a wide range of skills and strategies that lend it to being an effective tool for professional development. According to the IRA, the coach's roles and responsibilities fit into three broad categories: leadership and administration, instruction, and assessment and diagnosis (as cited in Kent, 2005, p. 240). Gibson (2006) cites Bean who identifies three levels of activity associated with the coaching role. Level one includes informal activities, such as curriculum development or leading study groups. Level two includes activities that are focused on areas of need and include co-planning lessons or analyzing student work. Bean identified level three coaching (eg. visiting classrooms and providing feedback to teachers), as one of the most formal and intensive aspects of the role of coaches

(p. 296). Whatever roles and responsibilities an instructional coach provides, the main focus must center on the use of student data. A coach makes decisions on professional development activities based on student assessment and observation data (Denton et al. 2007).

Impact of Coaching on Teachers

Teachers are faced with the daunting task of teaching a classroom of diverse learners, all at different levels of proficiency, to achieve the same standard. Teachers are exposed to new materials that help guide instruction during professional development activities, but it is hard to determine if they are becoming more knowledgeable about changing their instructional practices to meet the needs of their students (Bach & Poglinco, 2004). The vision of teaching for understanding to such diverse students requires most teachers to rethink their own ways of teaching, establish new classroom roles and expectations about student outcomes, and teach in ways they have never taught before (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995). Teachers are beginning to realize the need for more frequent professional development activities that will help them reach each student in their classroom effectively. Today, professional development needs to go beyond learning new skills. It must also provide occasions for teachers to reflect on their practice and to create new knowledge and beliefs about content, pedagogy, and learners (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995).

Teachers gained knowledge on the most recent instructional strategies through in-services or professional development classes. Then they were set loose to implement what they had learned in their classrooms. For beginning teachers and experienced teachers alike, this form of professional development is not always effective. A study by Showers (1982) found that

training followed up with peer coaching was more effective at enabling teachers' use of new practices than without peer coaching. For professional development to be effective, teachers must be involved as both learners and as teachers. Darling-Hammond and McLaughlin (1995) identify several characteristics of effective professional development. They emphasize that professional development needs to be engaging and encourage teachers to focus on teaching, assessment, observation, and reflection. The National Staff Development Council (as cited in Bean, 2004, p.2) also mentions that proper professional development includes opportunities for practice, research, and reflection. Darling-Hammond and McLaughlin (1995) emphasize that professional development must be collaborative and involve sharing knowledge as part of a learning community. Hargreaves & Fullan (2000) also mention the need for all teachers to learn from and be supported by a strong community of colleagues. Darling-Hammond and McLaughlin (1995) mention that professional development must be grounded in inquiry and reflection and sustained by ongoing support through coaching and collective problem solving. Garmston & Welch (2007) also emphasize the importance of creating a culture of inquiry that is student focused, reflective, and collaborative. Instructional coaches support teachers by providing opportunities to learn, share, and implement new ideas into their instruction through school-based professional development. "Just as good teaching must meet the diverse needs in a classroom, effective professional development must meet the individual needs of teachers," (Sweeney, 2003, p.3).

Instructional coaches need to attend to what teachers need in order to effectively transfer new learning and skill into classroom practice. "Learning theorist and organizational

theorists are teaching us that people learn best through active involvement and through thinking about and becoming articulate about what they have learned," (Lieberman, 1995, p. 642). Teachers want to feel knowledgeable in what they are teaching and that the strategies they are implementing make an impact in student achievement. The way teachers and adult learners acquire new knowledge seems to be more similar to how students learn (Sweeney, 2003; Lieberman, 1995). Teachers learn by doing (just like students do); by working with other teachers, examining students and their work, and by reflecting and sharing ideas (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995). Without this type of learning in professional development activities, it is often easy for teachers to continue teaching and using strategies they are comfortable with even though these may not be best practice.

The use of instructional coaching is a way for teachers to continue to develop professionally throughout the course of the year instead of just having one-day workshops. Many schools are looking to instructional coaches to help develop the kind of professional environment that encourages adult learning and teaching, thereby leading to increased opportunities for student learning (Carr, Herman, & Harris, 2005). Instructional coaching can be utilized as a tool for professional development in two ways: in-class support that coaches provide to individual teachers and group-focused professional development activities that are led by coaches (Bach & Poglinco, 2004).

During in-class support, teachers are able to work with instructional coaches planning and implementing research-based instructional strategies into the classroom. Instructional coaches are able to provide observation with feedback to teachers on the implementation of

these strategies. "Observation is a powerful way to offer teachers feedback specific to their needs while creating a more effective relationship between the teacher and the instructional coach (Sweeney, 2003, p. 44). Instructional coaches may also model lessons for teachers on specific strategies. Teachers work with the coach to plan a lesson focused on an area of interest or concern, then the coach provides a demonstration lesson that is followed by a debrief of the lesson. As instructional coaches build trust and rapport with the classroom teacher, opportunities for co-teaching naturally occur (Sweeney, 2003, p. 45). Additional resources and materials needed by the teacher are researched by the coach.

School districts who are struggling to improve student achievement are rethinking the traditional in-service model and developing Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) within the school culture (Wood, 2007). The Learning Communities Project, located in a mid-Atlantic city in the United States, evolved out of the idea that teachers who work in PLCs are more likely to improve student learning when teachers share their expertise and collaborate than when teacher's work alone (Wood, 2007). Coaches are often facilitators of PLCs and help establish a set of norms and protocols which promote an environment where teachers can collaborate with one another in order to support everyone's learning. Many research organizations, such as the National School Reform Faculty (NSRF), the Annenberg Institute, and the Coalition of Essential Schools, have developed protocols that are useful when working with teachers in PLCs. The use of these protocols in PLCs is to promote collaborative conversations and inquiry that matter for teachers work (Wood, 2007). The creation of learning communities in which learning and teaching are the ongoing work of coaches and teacher leaders changes

relationships, practices, and student learning in positive ways (Carr, Herman, & Harris, 2005). A study on the relationship between perceived effectiveness of elementary school staff groups and student performances on standardized tests suggests that the manner in which faculty members work together as a group influence student outcomes (Kesselring & Wheelan, 2005). Coaches work to establish a culture where teachers are seen as professionals who work together to design and implement the most effective instruction for their students. "With a focus on reflection, content, practice, and relationship, coaching can help leaders and teachers improve student learning and overall satisfaction within the professional learning community" (Carr, Herman, & Harris, 2005, p. 82).

In addition to having a source of on-going professional development and feedback, teachers are finding instructional coaches useful in analyzing student data to implement and establish instructional interventions. A major characteristic of the Student Focused Coaching (SFC) model is its focus on the use of student assessment data. Coaches using this model use assessment data as a basis for decision making about teachers and students who are the focus of coaching, to inform the content and style of coaching, and also by the coach and teacher together as they collaborate and problem solve (Denton et al., 2007). Having someone outside the classroom looking at student performance is instrumental in becoming reflective and intentional practitioners. Instructional coaches work with teachers to find ways to use data to drive their classroom instruction. This kind of student-focused feedback helps teachers focus less on their own teaching performance and more on how their teaching affects student outcomes. Coaches often discuss the pacing of instruction in terms of student progress and

frequently discuss and monitor student progress on assessments in relation to the end of the year standards (Denton, et al., 2007). Teachers can use the help of coaches to strategically plan lessons around learning targets and streamline instruction to meet those targets.

Conversations centered on what the students need to know and be able to do should drive lesson planning and curriculum mapping (Kinnucan-Welsch, Rosemary, & Grogan, 2006).

Instructional coaches encourage and facilitate teachers to become more reflective about their teaching practices. "The ideal environment is one in which colleagues can speak candidly with each other in a way that focuses attention on the improvement of practice," (Elmore, 2007, p. 22). Teachers need the opportunity to analyze their own practice and set goals for continued growth and improvement. As teachers make connections from what they are learning through school-based professional development and professional learning communities to classroom practice, they deepen their knowledge and apply what they are learning in real situations (Kinnucan-Welsch, et al., 2006). Instructional coaches encourage teachers, through guided questioning techniques, to be intentional about what they teach and reflective on the outcomes. "In other words, the teachers are engaged in continuous and reflective processes of diagnostic teaching, or more simply, an assess-plan-teach instructional cycle," (Kinnucan-Welsch, et at., 2006, p. 428). With the support of the instructional coach teachers make intentional changes in their teaching based on analysis of what the students need to know, what instruction will help students in developing that knowledge, and what students have learned through instruction (Kinnucan-Welsch, 2006).

Teachers' Impact on Students

How do we ensure that schools are employing quality teachers who can effectively meet the needs of a diverse population of students? "Better teaching is the key to higher student achievement. Improving the quality of both teachers and their teaching is one of the more important challenges facing departments of education and schools throughout the nation" (Kaplan & Owings, 2002, p. 3). Studies have established a direct correlation between teacher efficacy and student achievement. "Teacher efficacy measures the extent to which teachers believe their efforts will have a positive effect on student achievement," (Ross, 1992, p. 51). Teachers need to feel confident in their teaching abilities and be able to adapt best known strategies to meet the needs of the diverse group of learners in their classrooms. "Previous research has found that teacher efficacy predicts teachers' implementation of innovative programs and student achievement," (Ross, 1992, p. 52). As states and school districts continually change and increase student learning expectations, teachers, even the most experienced, scramble to keep up-to-date with the new standards and best teaching practices (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2000). Many school districts provide beginning teachers with a mentor or coach for the first year of their teaching experience but what about teachers who have been teaching for twenty years? With so many constant changes in the field of education and the continual change of student population, teachers cannot be teaching the same way they were twenty years ago and still be meeting the needs of all students. Although there is no proven link between teacher efficacy and coaching, teachers who believe they will make a difference are likely to see coaching as a way to expand their teaching techniques (Ross, 1992). Districts

provide numerous professional development opportunities, but teachers rarely have the time they need to become knowledgeable with the techniques and materials presented in the one day training. Most often these trainings occur right before the school year starts which gives teachers little time to absorb and own what they are being asked to teach. If teacher efficacy is what is needed for student achievement, then professional development needs to be designed in a way that can impact teacher practices in a positive and meaningful way.

For teachers to truly impact students they need to focus on providing students with consistently effective instruction day after day. One implication of a study by Haughey, Snart, & da Costa (2001) is that professional development should be an integral part of teachers' everyday professional practices. This task is overwhelming to even the most qualified teachers when asked to do it alone. Instructional coaches are designed to be partners with teachers so that they do not feel isolated behind their classroom doors and to depend solely on their own expertise. Teaching should involve collaboration with other teachers. An evidence-based reform effort, the CIERA School Change Framework, implemented in 13 schools around the United States over the course of two years concluded that when teachers collaborate, engage in ongoing, reflective professional development, and use data to improve teaching practice, they can achieve significant growth in their students' reading achievement (Taylor, Pearson, Peterson, & Rodriguez, 2005). Instructional coaching establishes a culture where teachers see the benefit of being a part of a Professional Learning Community. PLCs allow teachers to provide each other with ongoing instructional support and under the facilitation of the coach focus PD on areas of similar need and interests with other staff members.

It is often said that teachers are the best teachers of teachers. Instructional coaching establishes an environment where teachers can support one another and allow for individuals to draw on their personal expertise to aid in the professional development of other teachers. The job of a coach is to not only support and challenge individual teachers but to foster the potential of teachers working in groups to advance their practice, both individually and collectively (Keller, 2007). Coaches are not the experts, the teachers in the building are. Instructional coaching is a form of PD that allows teachers to learn from and reflect on their own teaching practices to develop the most effective classroom instruction. When teachers are willing to learn and team together to make sure that students are being given every possible opportunity to achieve then how can students not benefit from instructional coaching.

CHAPTER III

PROCEDURES

Research Procedures

Instructional coaching is the current trend in the Federal Way School District for providing in-class support for teachers. With this new position, the author began to read articles and books addressing the topic of coaching. The Federal Way Public Schools offered an instructional coach training session before the 2008/2009 school year. This gave the author a starting point for developing the questions that guided the research. Instructional coaches were also required to attend meetings once a month to receive training on instructional strategies for math and reading curriculum implementation. Each coach was also a part of a Professional Learning Community. These PLCs met once a month. As the researcher participated in these meetings and began to implement the instructional coaching model in her building, the project began to take form.

To gain understanding of the effectiveness of instructional coaches on student and teacher achievement, the author began to look for research-based articles that described the role of a coach, the effect coaching has on students, and the effect coaching has on teachers. Numerous journal articles were found utilizing online databases such as Education Resources Information Center (ERIC), Journal Storage (JSTOR), and Project Muse. These databases were easy to navigate and provided full text, research-based articles. Books on instructional coaching were also a useful source to better understand the job of instructional coaching. Selected sources were eliminated because they focused only on curriculum (literacy, math, cognitive, content, differentiated, leadership, etc.)

As the author began to research the role and benefits of an instructional coach on student achievement, she encountered the problem of discovering lack of research on how coaches were improving student achievement. Studies and research on how teachers impact student performance was available. This led the author to redirect her research to determine how teacher proficiency impacts student achievement. The researcher attempted to link instructional coaching to teacher proficiency and teacher proficiency to student achievement. In doing so she was able to determine that instructional coaches positively affect student achievement.

Plan for Implementation

The implementation of the instructional coaching model that I developed for the Federal Way School District began in September 2008. Many of the coaches were highly qualified classroom teachers but had little experience in instructional coaching. With this in mind, a “beginning coaches cohort” was established in which new coaches were provided with training by an experienced “coach of coaches.” This training included information on best teaching practices, workshops on coaching strategies, classroom instructional content, and individual professional development opportunities.

Coaches, in addition to obtaining their own professional development, began working with teachers using three different venues (1:1, small group, and whole group). This was to insure quality teaching performance and techniques were utilized and also to facilitate and establish a collaborative and supportive working environment among teachers and their coaches. This proved to be a challenging role for both coaches and teachers.

Beginning and experienced coaches who are working in a new building need a starting point from which to begin working with teachers. This project allows coaches to develop their own philosophy of "coaching." This project assists any coach who is looking for strategies and ideas to work effectively with teachers. This is a document, which should be added to and changed as the needs and strengths of the coach and the teachers they work with also change. For beginning coaches, this project should be referred to regularly as they discover what components are effective in working with their staff. In the future, this project should serve as a reference tool for coaches who are working with new staff members.

CHAPTER IV
INSTRUCTIONAL COACHING

Introduction

The following guide is based on the Federal Way School Districts' Instructional Coaching Model. Although this model is fairly new in this district and is a continuous work in progress, the overarching principles that drive this coaching model are in place:

Principal 1: Improving student achievement

Principal 2: Building teacher efficacy

Whatever model of coaching is being used, these two principals seem to be at the heart of the coaches job description. This cookbook is designed to give beginning instructional coaches a "starting point" as the begin working with teachers in their buildings.

This cookbook does not represent all that there is to know about instructional coaching. The intention of this book is to provide coaches with a menu of how instructional coaches can be utilized to improve student achievement and build teacher efficacy. This cookbook is intended to be a quick reference for a coach who is establishing a culture for effective professional development that will build teacher efficacy and foster student achievement.

Coaching Cookbook

For Beginning Coaches



Becca Tonseth

Woodmont K-8

Federal Way School District

Spring 2010

Welcome!

Instructional Coaching is like being a gourmet chef. To be successful you need to offer a variety of food on the menu, be able to cook the food to meet the criteria of the customers, and make sure that they leave feeling content and pleased about the time and money spent at your restaurant. These are just a few of the demands a chef takes on to ensure that people will want to visit their restaurant. In the same respect, coaches must also be able to offer a “menu” of choices in which teachers decide what venue of coaching meets their needs. Coaches need to adapt to the teaching and learning style of each member of their staff the same way a chef cooks food to the preference of their customers. Instructional coaches also seek ways to make coaching a valuable strategy for developing best teaching practices and embedding professional development to improve the success of all students. This cookbook is an introduction for beginning instructional coaches. It contains a “menu” for coaching venues and recipes for starting successful coaching practices. As with any cookbook, the recipes are just a starting point and are designed to be tweaked to meet the needs of the “cook.” As you grow as a coach and discover the needs of your “customers” this cookbook will begin to take on the flavor of your own coaching style and the likes/dislikes of the people you serve.

Happy Cooking!

Becca Tonseth

Instructional Coach

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Introduction: Cookbook Set-Up

This cookbook is designed to be a starting point for a new “chef.” Each chapter is broken into two sections: a Chefs Menu and a Public Menu. The Chefs Menu is for the instructional coach. The coach can go to the “chefs menu” and find out strategies and tips for making each part of the meal. This menu talks the coach through the background and ideas behind each course and why each one is important. The Public Menu is for the teachers. After the instructional coach plans and prepares a “course” they must be able to effectively serve it to their customers. The public menu provides sample “recipes” that have been used with teachers and have led to successful coaching opportunities.

The purpose of this cookbook is to provide beginning instructional coaches with a starting point for their own coaching “recipes.” Coaching can look different in every building and is differentiated based on the needs and demands of the staff being worked with. Sometimes the biggest obstacle for a beginning coach is just getting your foot in the door. This cookbook is designed to do that. It is then up to the coach to keep the “customers” coming back by expanding and refining the ideas shared in this book.

Please note:

This content has been redacted due to copyright concerns.

Activity sheets from various sources, on pages 29 through 47, have been redacted.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

In researching the roles of an instructional coach, the impact coaching has on teacher efficacy, and how teachers contribute to student success, it is apparent that although coaching is a relatively new trend, there is no shortage of professional resources available for the teacher and the coach. There were numerous resources available on specific forms of coaching (cognitive, instructional, differentiated, leadership, content) and various job descriptions of instructional coaches, which made synthesizing the research complex.

Although the research was challenging, the creation of chapter four was enjoyable. The supporting tools and documents that are included in the coaching cookbook are designed for coaches to use with the teachers to which they are assigned. The content of this project was compiled from information provided to all beginning coaches in the Federal Way School District during Coaching 101 training or adapted through the personal experience of the author. This cookbook provides a way to organize the information handed out during trainings and how to put it into a form that can be used immediately.

The cookbook was designed to be a starting point in developing a coaching philosophy and practice. It is a reference tool to support beginning coaches in establishing an environment that is conducive to professional collaboration and development. Because instructional coaching is relatively new to the FWSD, this

cookbook also serves as a reference to teachers as they begin to inquire about the purpose and role of the coaches in their buildings.

Conclusions

After reading professional texts, searching the internet, engaging in conversations with colleagues, attending district coach trainings, participating in coaching Professional Learning Communities, and undergoing the process of creating the cookbook, the cookbook was created to be useful to any beginning coach in establishing coaching in their building. Adult learning theory, the different approaches to coaching, and the process of change, are just a few examples of different components of instructional coaching. Although these topics are appropriate in a discussion of instructional coaching, they were not included in this project.

This project has demonstrated that teachers directly affect student learning and achievement. In addition, there is growing evidence on the impact of coaching on teacher efficacy. More research needs to be done to connect the outcomes of student success with teachers who are regularly working with an instructional coach.

As a beginning coach, it was important to incorporate all the skills and research I learned regarding how to be an effective coach and streamline it to work with the teachers in the building. I also had to take into account that before I could effectively work with teachers I needed to have a clear vision of what instructional coaching was. Putting together Chapter Four helped me to focus on what was important to a beginning coach and how to get teachers to be open to working with a coach.

I have used many of the documents that are currently in the coaching cookbook. Teachers in my building have been very willing to sit down with me during their planning time and have a coaching conversation about things that are negatively impacting their work with the children in their class. I have only been able to accomplish this by establishing a sense of trust. As I develop and improve as an instructional coach and the teachers I work with value the benefits of coaching in their classrooms, the recipes in the cookbook will change to also meet their future needs.

Recommendations

As a former classroom teacher, I can see the potential that job-embedded professional development has on the quality of classroom instruction and classroom culture creating an environment for learning. As a classroom teacher, I never had the opportunity to work with an instructional coach. As I began my work as an instructional coach I was given the chance to work with a coach of coaches. Through conversations and support from the coach of coaches, I have experienced success and reassurance in my own abilities as a professional developer. It is my hope that teachers see the benefits of instructional coaching as they reflect on their professional growth.

I have been able to have success providing an environment for teachers where they can share their goals for their students without feeling threatened. Having an effective coaching conversation is a skill I am working on daily. The procedural steps that I identified in the cookbook are the ones I have found most helpful to me.

I need to take time to process what teachers share during their instructional coaching sessions with me as I often do not know what the next step should be to

continue their progress. I know that I don't have to have all the answers, but I found it hard to follow through with ideas/concerns shared during these conversations unless I scheduled a specific date and time to debrief.

Next year I hope to build on what I have done and improve the provision of instructional coaching to even a higher level. Coaching is being looked at critically next year by the Federal Way School District to see if it is making a positive difference in teacher efficacy and student learning and that the proof is supported by data.

I recommend that as a result of this study, schools need to continue providing opportunities for teachers to refine their instruction by receiving job-embedded professional development through an instructional coach. It is recommended that teachers work collaboratively with colleagues, in the venue of Professional Learning Communities, to provide quality instruction and develop best practice. I recommend for school districts to value instructional coaching as a valid program for improving teacher and student success. As a result of this study, there should be continued documentation of the effect instructional coaching has on teacher efficacy , and more importantly, student achievement.

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