

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:

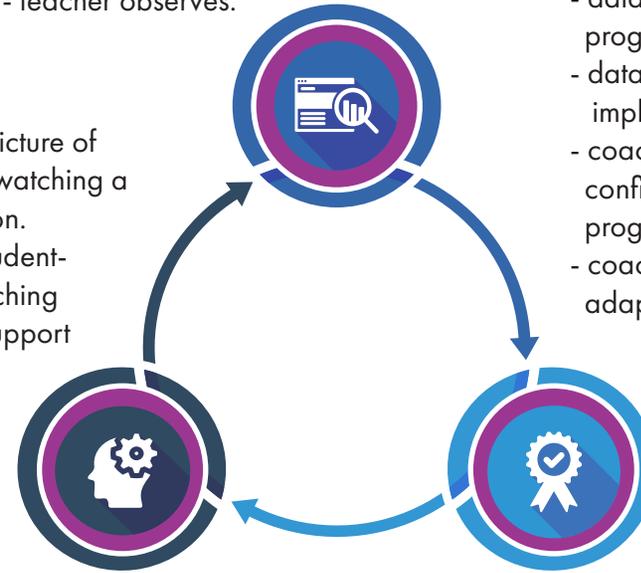
- coach shares different teaching strategies.
- coach prompts teacher to modify practice if appropriate.
- coach provides modeling.
- teacher observes.

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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