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Application of Instructional Coaching Models

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Abstract

The purpose of this literature review is a discussion of three different categories of instructional coaching (teacher-centered coaching, student-centered coaching, and differentiated coaching) and the purposes of each type of coaching model. The review first examines the evolution of coaching and how it was first introduced into school systems. As the first coaching model of peer coaching spread around the nation, refinements were made and new coaching models introduced. Technology has changed the landscape of education, and schools are looking for effective methods to assist teachers in preparing students for an unknown future. The practice of traditional professional development methods is no longer effective in providing teachers the skills they need to prepare students for the ever-changing world. Instructional coaching, when well-designed and supported by administrators, can be an effective way of improving instructional practices and increase student learning.

Application of Instructional Coaching Models

Joyce and Showers (1980) conducted a two-year study to determine the most effective ways teachers acquire skills to improve their instructional practices. These scholars found that certain conditions need to be present in teacher training if the teachers are going to retain and transfer their learning. The results of their study led Joyce and Showers to introduce the idea of peer coaching (Joyce & Showers, 2002; Showers & Joyce, 1996). Even with its long history, a standardized definition of instructional coaching is not available (Kraft, Blazer, & Hogan, 2018). Most scholars agree that instructional coaching includes an individual who works with a teacher or team of teachers to observe and discuss instructional strategies with the goal of improving student achievement (Aguilar, 2013; Joyce & Showers, 2002; Kise, 2017; Knight, 2007; Kraft, Blazer, & Hogan, 2018; Sweeney, 2013). The methods an instructional coach uses may vary according to the needs of the district, the school, or the individual teacher. In addition, instructional coaches may use a variety of styles to accomplish the main goal of having a positive impact on student achievement.

In 2014, the state of Iowa adopted its Teacher Leadership and Compensation (TLC) program to encourage school districts to invest in more teacher leadership roles. As a result, almost every school district in Iowa utilizes some form of instructional coaching (IA Dept. of Ed., 2019). Yet, even under the TLC program, one standardized definition and method of instructional coaching has not been articulated. Instead, school districts determine what they want from their teacher leaders and set goals according to the district's needs (Bloom, Castegna, Moir, & Warren, 2005). A flexible definition can be a benefit to schools and districts adopting instructional coaching programs as they are able to adapt the programs to their unique improvement goals.

Without a standardized definition of instructional coaching, coaches can perform a multitude of roles, depending on the situation. At one time, a coach may be a resource specialist, while at another point he/she could be acting more as a mentor. Other common roles an instructional coach may carry include data coach, curriculum specialist, learning facilitator, professional development coordinator, co-teacher, and whatever may be needed at the time (Killion & Harrison, 2017; Knight, 2007; Kraft, Blazer, & Hogan, 2018). According to Killion and Harrison (2017), perhaps one of the most important roles an instructional coach has is that of a change agent. The purpose of any instructional coaching program is to assist teachers in making changes that will lead to improved student performance.

Instructional coaching programs may also follow different methods. While there are several coaching models available, they can be separated into three main categories: teacher-centered coaching, student-centered coaching, and a differentiated or blended style of coaching. The teacher-centered coaching (TCC) model places the teacher at the center of the coaching cycle. The coach works with a teacher to identify an instructional change the teacher would like to make in his/her practice (Aguilar, 2013; Eisenberg, 2016; Knight, 2007). This may include implementing a new strategy, or it could be that the teacher wants to improve an instructional strategy he/she is already using. The student-centered coaching (SCC) model emphasizes using student data to drive the coaching cycles (Sweeney, 2013). The teacher and the coach analyze student work to determine areas the teacher needs to work on to improve student performance. Finally, the differentiated coaching (DC) model combines aspects of both TCC and SCC, depending on the goals identified by the teacher and the coach (Bloom, Castegna, Moir, & Warren, 2005; Fazel, 2013; Kise, 2017).

With the implementation of coaching as part of many school improvement strategies, it is critical that school systems evaluate the purpose of coaching, the role coaches play in each of the models, and the goals that each model is designed to achieve. This literature review will examine the foundation of instructional coaching in schools and the impact each of the three main models has on both instructional practices and student learning. Instructional coaching can be beneficial to improving student achievement, but only if the right coaching model is put into place, and the instructional coaches have the necessary support they need to accomplish the tasks.

<div align="center">**Review of the Literature**</div>

Evolution of Instructional Coaching

Coaching is not a new concept. Athletes have been coached for centuries, singers have voice coaches, and there are also coaches in the business world. Instructional coaching has grown in education over the last few decades (Knight, 2007), but this practice is based on the coaching models in other areas.

Executive coaching is practiced in the business world. This type of coaching, which is also referred to as transformational coaching or process coaching, uses a process to help employees identify and work through obstacles to achieve success (Knight, 2007). Killion and Harrison (2017) explain that Hargrove (1995) describes coaching as a way to develop new ways of thinking. Executive coaches work with individuals to collect data, provide feedback, and design action plans to achieve the desired results. Whitmore (2017) uses the term performance coaching and developed the GROW model. GROW stands for Goal, Reality, Options, and Will (p. 96). The focus of executive or performance coaching is on helping the employee set and reach professional goals.

Another area where coaching has become popular is in one's personal life. People may hire life coaches to help them with more personal areas, such as health or finances. These types of coaches are known as co-active coaches because the coaches work as partners with the client to achieve a more balanced life (Killion & Harrison, 2017; Knight, 2007). In co-active coaching, the client sets the agenda, and the coach is there to ensure that the client stays on track and reaches his or her goals. The main purpose of co-active coaching is for the coach to support the client, but the client is in control of his/her goals and the process.

Coaching teachers began with the introduction of peer coaching in the 1980s after realizing that most educational reform efforts did not lead to improved academic quality (Showers & Joyce, 1996). Peer coaching often involves teams of teachers planning together, observing each other, and offering feedback to improve their professional practice (Killion & Harrison, 2017). In an effort to keep coaching from appearing evaluative, the practice of peers providing feedback to each other was eliminated (Joyce & Showers, 2002; Showers & Joyce, 1996). Peer coaching is about collaboration. With all that teachers are asked to do, collaborating on planning and teaching may reduce some stress.

Instructional coaching takes on many of the qualities of the other types of coaching. In general, the main goal of instructional coaching is to improve teacher performance by collaborating with one or more individuals with a similar background in order to achieve a desired result. The way teachers are trained to be instructional coaches and the different models used to implement coaching can vary from district to district, school to school, coach to coach.

Leadership Development and Coaching

Instructional coaches must be able to employ leadership skills so that they can facilitate continuous learning in the teachers they coach. Whitmore (2017) defines coaching as "unlocking

people's potential to maximize their own performance" (pp. 12-13). Leaders are often tasked with the job of bringing out the best in their employees for the benefit of the entire system. Effective leaders are able to tap into the employees' skills and talents and inspire them to grow beyond expectations (Wiseman, Allen, & Foster, 2013). Coaches must be good leaders so that they can inspires teachers to want to improve and then be able to provide the leadership to help them develop professionally.

Mieliwocki and Fatheree (2019) state that effective leaders build positive relationships with others, listen to their clients, understand adult learning theory, and model the behaviors they want to help their clients achieve. Whitmore (2017) adds that responsible leaders of the future need to have "values and vision and to be authentic and agile and internally aligned" (p. 224). According to Whitmore, development is a journey, and coaches can help to guide people on this journey. Coaches must also be values-driven and have a vision if they are to guide people on the journey of personal development.

When coaches, as leaders, focus on improving instructional practices, students will perform better (Goodwin, Gibson, Lewis, and Rouleau, 2018; Mieliwocki & Fatheree, 2019). Coaching should ignite the teacher's curiosity, which will then motivate the teacher to want to make changes to his or her practice. People are less likely to want to change when they are given directives and not shown why change is necessary. According to Mieliwocki and Fatheree, an effective leader possesses the skill to help individuals become curious about new ways of doing something. Instructional coaches ignite a teacher's desire to change by making them aware of the current reality and asking questions to help them come up with techniques as potential improvement for student learning.

Three Models of Coaching

Common instructional coaching models seen in school systems can be placed into three categories: teacher-centered, student-centered, and differentiated. These three broad categories encompass more specific coaching models, but all coaching models have the goal of changing instructional practices to improve student learning (Aguilar, 2013; Killion & Harrison, 2017; Knight, 2007; Sweeney, 2013). The difference among the three categories is in the focus of the coaching.

Teacher-Centered Coaching

In teacher-centered coaching (TCC), the focus of instructional coaching is to help the teacher improve his or her instructional practice (Sweeney, 2013). Coaches take teachers through a coaching cycle in an effort to help each teacher become aware of how he or she is implementing a particular strategy or instructional practice. Becoming aware of one's practice is the first step in creating a desire to change (Whitmore, 2017). Following the TCC model involves a structured coaching cycle that includes a pre-observation conference, an observation, and a post-observation conference (Knight, 2007). During the pre-observation conference, the coach and the teacher collaborate to determine the teacher's instructional goal. This goal is based on something the teacher wishes to change or implement. For example, a teacher may have come across a new strategy to help students with vocabulary. The coach will ask the teacher questions until they can agree upon a goal for the lesson to be observed. Then, the coach will observe the teacher and take notes. During the post-observation conference, the coach reveals the data that was collected and continues to ask questions that will help the teacher reflect upon the lesson. The purpose of TCC is for the coach to guide the teacher into becoming aware of his or her practices, set a goal to change or improve those practices, and then guide the teacher into

reflecting upon his or her practices. The coach is not an evaluator and does not attempt to push the teacher into a particular way of thinking. However, the goal of the coach may be to help the teacher become better at a district or school-wide practice.

One teacher-centered instructional coaching model was developed from the Partnership Philosophy framework (Knight, 2007). The idea behind this framework is that coaches work with teachers to help them become aware of their instructional practices so that the teachers can make instructional changes. Knight's framework follows the pre-observation conference, observation, reflective conference cycle. In the pre-observation conference, coaches ask guiding questions to help the teacher determine an instructional goal and how the coach can collect data. After the observation, which may be videotaped, the coach asks the teacher to first reflect on what went well before sharing the data that the coach collected. In Knight's model, the coach asks probing questions and practices active listening (Knight, 2016), allowing the teacher to drive the conversation and notice areas of strength as well as areas of improvement.

Aguilar (2013) also promotes a teacher-centered coaching model, but she views most coaching models as coming from a deficit perspective, or focused on fixing the teacher. Aguilar's coaching model views the teacher as an expert with whom the coach must build a relationship before the teacher can be coached. Rather than trying to fix the teacher, Aguilar suggests that coaches focus on the teacher's strengths and promote the idea of continuous improvement. A key part of Aguilar's coaching model is to ask questions, not just about instructional practices and goals, but about the teacher as an individual. Once the coach knows and understands the teacher, coaching is easier because the teacher feels valued and sees the coach as someone who can help him or her grow as a professional.

Student-Centered Coaching

Sweeney (2013) supports a student-centered approach to instructional coaching. School systems invest both money and talent into instructional coaching systems, and they need to know that their investment is having an impact on student learning. Maintaining a focus on improving student success, Sweeney advocates that coaches work with teachers around evidence of student learning rather than evidence of instructional practices. Sweeney's model asks coaches to help teachers set learning targets and design formative assessments to monitor progress. Teachers are asked to design lessons based on how well students are performing. Student-centered coaching moves the focus of coaching from the teacher's actions to student performance.

Hasbrouck (2016) developed her student-focused model to improve literacy skills in students. Hasbrouck's model, which was primarily developed for improving literacy instruction, has been used in all content areas. In agreement with Hasbrouck's model, Aguilar (2013) articulated that the student-focused model is not designed to help teacher's fix their instructional practices. The student-centered coaching model emphasizes that the role of coaches is to provide the support teachers need to maintain effective practices with a lens on student performance. The slight change in perspective from how can the teacher become a better instructor to how can the teacher help the students perform better is meant to create a more welcoming coaching environment. The focus on student work may lead to a change in instructional performance, or it may lead to the coach assisting the teacher in other ways, such as designing better assessments. The student-focused coaching model utilizes student work as evidence with less emphasis on teacher reflection.

An instructional coach performs various roles, depending on the teacher's needs. In the student-focused model, following the three-part coaching cycle is just one option. Since the

emphasis is on analyzing the success of students, the teacher may need the coach to engage in

services other than observing and conferencing. The coach may assist by finding resources,

teaching a new strategy, or collaborating with the teacher to solve a problem. The coach is there

to help the teacher improve student performance no matter what that means to the teacher.

Whether following Hasbrouck's (2016) model or Aguilar's (2013) model of coaching, one of the

main characteristics of the student-focused model is to build a mutually respectful relationship

between the coach and the teacher.

Differentiated Coaching

A third instructional coaching model can be categorized as differentiated or blended

coaching. Kise (2017) describes differentiated coaching as using a both/and perspective rather

than an either/or perspective. In other words, coaches need to consider the individual

personalities of each teacher so that the coach can create the best coaching experience. By

understanding the teacher's personality, the coach can adapt his/her strategies to ensure that the

teacher's needs are being met in a way that fits with the teacher's values and beliefs.

Differentiated coaching does not focus solely on changing instructional practices or on analyzing

student data. Rather, the coach utilizes any strategy that will best meet the goals and the needs of

the teacher (Bloom, Castagna, Moir, & Warren, 2005; Kise, 2017). Differentiated coaching

allows the coach to work with the teacher on instructional practices, student performance, or

both.

Fazel (2013) presents a different version of a coaching model called the Teacher-Coach-

Student model. This model differs from both the teacher-centered model and the student-

centered model in that the coach works with both the teacher and the students to develop an

inquiry-based learning environment. Like the other models, the coach builds a relationship with

the teacher and practices active listening. Unlike the other models, the goal of the coaching cycle

is to model inquiry-based learning with the teacher so that the teacher may then practice inquiry-

based learning with his or her students. In Fazel's model, the students are an integral part of the

learning process and not the passive recipients of the coaching.

Coaching as Professional Development

Instructional coaching is often offered as an alternative to traditional forms of

professional development (PD). These traditional forms of PD, where a large group of teachers

gather to hear an expert espouse a new strategy or introduce a new initiative, are ineffective

(Goodwin, Gibson, Lewis, & Rouleau, 2018; Knight, 2007; Kraft, Blazer, & Hogan, 2018).

Schools in the United States spend millions of dollars each year on PD programs, yet the

research has shown no significant improvement in either teacher instruction or student

achievement (Garet et al., 2008; TNTP, 2015) from most PD methods. Many traditional PD

programs provide generic messages rather than specific strategies that meet the needs of

individual teachers (Kraft, Blazer, & Hogan, 2018; TNTP, 2015). Even if the topic of the

presentation is inspiring, teachers lack both time and training to fully and effectively implement

new initiatives provided through traditional forms of PD. It stands to reason that if teachers are

not effectively implementing new initiatives, those initiatives have little to no impact on student

achievement. School districts around the nation have turned to coaching as a method of

providing job-embedded, individualized forms of PD that teachers can implement and practice

with guidance (Galey, 2016; Kraft, Blazer, & Hogan, 2018).

With an effective instructional coaching program, many of the issues that make

traditional professional development ineffective are resolved. Instructional coaching techniques

involve several principles of andragogy, or adult learning theory (Cox, 2015). A key principle of

andragogy is that adults want to be involved in the design of their learning. In traditional PD, the learning is designed by a small group of individuals and pushed out to teachers. Instructional coaching makes PD more personal by having the coach work directly with a teacher or a small group of teachers to set goals, then determine how the teacher will progress toward those goals. Instructional coaching methods give teachers a voice in their professional learning and growth.

Birnie (2019) conducted a small study to see how coached clients in the business field perceived the coaching process. From studying three individuals, Birnie found that the coached clients were unfamiliar with how to best utilize the coaching services. In the beginning of their coaching experience, the clients allowed the coaches to take the lead and guide them. However, once they gained more experience with the coaching process, they became more empowered and began to identify their own learning goals. Instructional coaches, therefore, should keep in mind that teachers who are new to being coached may not feel comfortable in leading their own learning. It is important that coaches get to know the teachers and their concerns before expecting the teachers to fully engage in the coaching process.

Another principle of andragogy is that adults learn better when they can make connections to prior knowledge (Cox, 2015). Connecting to prior knowledge is important for all learners, but for adults, it also means that the coaches should respect the teacher's knowledge and experience when designing the learning program. Traditional PD is often a one-size-fits-all message, assuming that all teachers need to know the same strategies or information to be motivated to make a change. By working with individual teachers, instructional coaches are able to take into consideration the experiences of that teacher, as well as the teacher's values and

beliefs. When teachers are able to build upon what they already know, they are more likely to include new strategies in their professional practice.

Andragogy also states that for adults to want to make a change, they need to feel some sense of urgency or see an immediate application of the change. A problem with traditional PD methods is that some teachers either do not feel the sense of urgency, or they are not provided the time to learn how to apply the new learning so that change can occur. Instructional coaching cycles often last between four and six weeks as the coach works with the teacher to identify the goal, design a plan, observe the teacher implementing the plan, reflect on the implementation and make revisions, and finally conduct more observations and more reflections until the strategy has been learned and the goal met. Coaches can help the teacher collect and analyze data so that the need for change is clear. The coach then works with the teacher to develop new strategies or improve existing strategies that will improve instruction.

Adult learning theory also states that adults are driven more by intrinsic motivation than extrinsic rewards and consequences (Cox, 2015). Extrinsic rewards are effective at motivating people for short-term goals, but not at helping people with long-term change (Pink, 2009). For true change to take place, teachers need to have the time to practice the new learning and be able to reflect and make adjustments. According to Pink, motivation involves giving the individual a choice in what needs to be changed, making the new learning challenging and achievable, and clearly stating the purpose or need for the change. Instructional coaching methods are designed to be sustained over time and focused on improving a specific skill (Kraft, Blazer, & Hogan, 2018). Teachers who are given time and support will be able to see the effects of the changes they make and continue to adjust and improve their instructional practices.

Coaches as Change Agents

We live in a constantly changing world in which people will need to be able to adapt to situations that we cannot currently imagine. Teachers, especially, need to engage in new learning so that they can prepare students for a world filled with technology and jobs that do not yet exist (Esteves, 2019; Marx, 2015). Instead of dispensing knowledge to students, teachers need to be able to create curriculum that utilizes active learning with a focus on critical thinking and problem-solving skills. Teachers heavily trained in content must learn new ways of teaching to meet future needs.

The purpose of most PD models is to introduce new ideas that are meant to change the way people do business as usual (Killion & Harrison, 2017). As indicated earlier, traditional PD sessions are ineffective because of lack of follow-through and connections to individual needs. Instructional coaching, however, is a more effective way of facilitating change in individuals because it is on-going and job-embedded (Sweeney, 2013). The need to prepare students for an unknown future means that we need to move from accepting the status quo to a culture of continuous improvement. Esteves (2019) informs us that the amount of technical information doubles every two years, so teachers must keep up with societal changes.

Hall and Hord (2015) explain that change is a process that takes time and involves working through stages. To assist individuals through the change process, it is important to assess how they feel about change and where they are in the process. Hall and Hord created the Concerns-Based Adoption Model (C-BAM) to assist leaders in identifying where an individual stands in the change process and to provide leaders with strategies to help people work through the change process. The authors provide several tools, such as the Stages of Concern questionnaire, the Levels of Use framework, and the Innovation Configuration map, to assist

leaders in guiding individuals through change. Coaches can use these tools to assess where teachers are in the change process and design coaching sessions to make the process easier for teachers.

One of the most useful tools an instructional coach can use with a teacher in the change process is the Innovation Configuration map (Hall & Hord, 2015). This map describes the stages, from beginning to full implementation, of an innovation that the teacher is attempting to learn. Once the instructional coach and the teacher set a goal and identify strategies to reach that goal, an Innovation Configuration map can be utilized to help the teacher reflect on the progress he or she is making. Use of an Innovation Configuration map is nonjudgmental; therefore, it makes an effective reflection tool to help the teacher grow professionally.

Change is a personal experience (Hall & Hord, 2015), and personal change is complicated (Knight, 2007). Teaching is not just a job for most people, it is part of who they are. Change affects one's habits, behaviors, and/or long-held beliefs. When a teacher is asked to change, more is involved than just adding a new strategy to their practice. Those strategies are tied to the teacher's personality and way of life. Coaches can make the change process less threatening if they have the right tools and understand how to use them.

Impact of Coaching on Student Achievement

Students need to learn 21st-century skills that require critical thinking and problem-solving skills (Esteves, 2019; Marx, 2015) if they are to be successful members of our future society. Preparing students for high-stakes tests or asking them to complete artificial assignments that do not have real world applications will not get students ready for the future. The Iowa Department of Education's (2019) TLC program is built on the idea that "[i]mproving student learning requires improving the instruction they receive every day" (p. 4). Coaching, as a method

for helping teachers learn and implement new ways of teaching that will engage students in

active learning, may have the greatest impact on student achievement.

The goal of instructional coaching programs is to have a positive impact on student

achievement. Some coaching models focus on teacher-centered approaches, while others focus

on a more student-centered approach. Kraft, Blazer, and Hogan (2018) conducted a meta-

analysis of over 60 studies on the effects of coaching, and they found teacher coaching has a

significant impact on both the teacher's instructional practice and student achievement. The

greatest impact, however, was on the improvement of teacher instructional practices. Many

scholars agree that improving the quality of instruction leads to an increase in student

performance (Darling-Hammond, Hyler, & Gardner, 2017; Kraft, Blazer, & Hogan, 2018; Wang,

2017). Whereas research suggests that coaching improves the quality of teaching, that

improvement tends to have a small impact on student performance.

In their meta-analysis, Kraft, Blazer, and Hogan (2018) found that small coaching

programs were twice as effective as larger coaching programs in improving both instructional

effectiveness and student achievement. One explanation for smaller coaching programs being

more effective may be that coaches tend to have a greater effect when working with a small

number of teachers (Wang, 2017). Kraft, Blazer, and Hogan suggest that larger coaching

programs face a greater challenge of finding high-quality teachers to fill the number of coaching

positions the school needs. Thus, if the larger programs are not able to find enough qualified

coaches, the coaches may be stretched too thin to be as effective as they could be.

Impact of Coaching on Teachers

An effective coaching program can have profound effects on the teacher. Gladwell

(2008) found that for continuous improvement, individuals need to participate in at least "ten

thousand hours of deliberate practice" (as cited in Aguilar, 2013, p. 7) to truly master a new skill.

Gathered in a large auditorium to listen to the same message as every other person in that

auditorium is not deliberate practice. On the other hand, teachers working with a coach to plan

and implement new learning while receiving both support and feedback is deliberate practice.

Though one round of coaching may not change the teacher's habits, continuous work with

coaches is more effective than a one-size-fits-all professional learning session. Through the use

of instructional coaching programs, teachers can engage in professional learning as part of their

daily teaching routine.

Coaching Encourages Collaboration

Knight (2007) suggests that "[c]ollaboration is the lifeblood of instructional coaching" (p.

27). In all instructional coaching models, the coach and the teacher work together in some

fashion to effect change. Collaborating may include the coach and the teacher planning a lesson

to co-teach (Sweeney, 2013), or it could be a coach working with a team of teachers to assist

them in analyzing student data (Killion & Harrison, 2017). The very introduction of a coach

means some type of collaboration will take place.

Coaching Builds on Teacher's Expertise

Adult learning theory explains that adults are more willing to learn a new skill if they are

able to have a voice and build on what they already know (Cox, 2015). Whether a teacher is

implementing a new strategy or learning a new position, acknowledging the teacher's skills and

connecting those skills to the new learning is key to being a successful coach. As part of her new

position as an academic leader at Vanderbilt University Medical Center, Kim Rathmell was

coached by an outside expert (Rathmell, Brown, & Kilburg, 2019). Over a two-year period,

Rathmell grew as a leader through her experiences with her coach. The coach encouraged

Rathmell to use the expertise she had gained from her previous position as an academic physical

scientist to make decisions for her new role in leadership. When something did not turn out as

expected, the coach used the opportunity to guide Rathmell into new ways of thinking, but she

did not throw away the previous knowledge. Instead, the coach helped Rathmell build on what

she already knew so that she could improve her leadership skills and her expertise in her field.

Coaching Creates Long-Term Change

Research completed by Joyce and Showers (2002) concluded that 95% of the teachers

who receive coaching in the classroom continue to use the new skill in their practice. In contrast,

0% of the teachers used the new skill in the classroom after learning the theory through

discussion or demonstration, and 5% used the new skill when receiving feedback after practicing

the skill. Adding coaching to the learning process, where teachers are coached while teaching,

dramatically improves the teacher's retention of the knowledge and usage of the new skill in

instructional practice (Showers & Joyce, 1996).

In addition to retaining improvements in instructional practices, coaching can lead to

long-term changes in school culture. An effective coaching program where coaching is seen as a

method of professional growth and not as a way to fix a teacher's instruction can lead to a

positive culture (Eisenberg, 2016). Coaching builds a more transparent culture with teachers

collaborating and supporting each other to develop lessons and strategies that benefit all students

in the building (Killion & Harrison, 2017). School leaders who promote coaching as a model for

continuous growth make it easier for teachers to want to work together.

Limitations of Instructional Coaching Programs

A big question for many districts is whether or not the cost of instructional coaching is

worth the benefits. Experts argue that school districts spend millions of dollars on PD every year,

and with evidence that traditional PD is ineffective in producing long-term, systemic change, an investment in coaching is well worth it (Roy, 2019). However, for the coaching program to have the desired results, it must be well-planned, sustainable, and supported by administration and teachers.

When an instructional coaching program is not well-planned, it can lead to ineffective coaching practices. In an eight-year study of coaches from over 20 middle schools, Kane and Rosenquist (2018) found that coaches are often spread too thin to be effective. Principals may be pressured to make short-term changes and might use coaches in more administrative ways than for individualized professional development. On the other hand, if a coach is hired by a district rather than a school, the coach may not spend enough time in one school to build positive relationships with the teachers. An effective coaching program clearly describes the role and purpose of the coach and allows the coach to build relationships with the teachers.

Garet et al. (2008) found that adding coaching to a rigorous professional development model that includes many hours of intensive, focused study in one area did not significantly improve retention of teacher knowledge or student performance. Teachers in Group A received 48 hours of training from experts in a workshop-style institute, while teachers in Group B received an additional 60 hours of coaching along with the workshop training. Teachers in both groups had a greater retention of knowledge in reading strategies and instruction than the control group; however, student test scores did not show a significant improvement. In addition, the year after the training and coaching were no longer implemented, neither teachers nor students demonstrated continued positive results. To better assess the effect coaching may have on student achievement, more long-term studies are needed. One may conclude that if instructional coaching improves the teacher's knowledge and practice, that continued implementation of the

improved practice will eventually lead to improved student performance. Just as it takes time for

a teacher to reap the benefits of coaching to improve instructional strategies, it will take time to

realize the impact the improved teaching methods has on student achievement.

The main goal of education is to prepare students to be as successful as possible in the

future. School districts invest millions of dollars in professional development every year, and

that money should be spent on programs that will yield the best results for academic success.

More studies are needed to assess the effectiveness of instructional coaching. Without a

standardized definition of coaching, or a single coaching model, true benefits of coaching are

difficult to assess. Instead, a district or school needs to determine their desired results, to identify

the best method to help teachers move through the change process, to implement a well-designed

plan, and to provide the necessary support to follow through on the changes.

Conclusion

As schools and school districts continue to find ways to improve instruction and increase

student achievement, instructional coaching is becoming more popular. Instructional coaching,

however, should not be considered a fad or the newest trend in education. When planned well

and used appropriately, instructional coaching can be an effective method to deliver professional

learning.

School leaders need to determine the best model of instructional coaching to use before

fully implementing a coaching program. If the goal is to implement a school- or district-wide

initiative, then a teacher-centered coaching model is the best choice. In the TCC model, the

coach works with the teacher to set a goal, then observes the teacher in practice. The coach

collects data for the teacher around the goal, shares the data with the teacher, and facilitates a

reflecting conference. The discussion around the data allows the teacher to become aware of his

or her instructional practices and the effects they are having on student learning. With the

assistance of the coach, the teacher reflects on his or her teaching practices and modifies his/her

instruction to reach the intended goal. The TCC model is best when one coach is working with

several teachers to improve instruction. Researchers found that by improving instructional

practices, student achievement will improve (Darling-Hammond, Hyler, & Gardner, 2017;

Wang, 2017). Kraft, Blazer, and Hogan (2018) discovered that improving instructional practices

has a small effect on increasing student achievement. More studies need to be conducted to

measure the true effects instructional coaching has on improving instruction as a way to increase

student achievement. Once instructional coaching has been found to improve instructional

practices, then researchers need to assess the relationship between the improved instruction and

student achievement.

Schools with established effective teaching practices should consider implementing a

student-centered coaching model. The SCC model places the emphasis on student work rather

than instructional practices. Coaches using this model recognize the strengths and knowledge of

teachers as they build positive relationships to understand the unique qualities of each teacher.

By understanding the personalities of the teachers, the coach can assist them in finding ways to

improve student achievement. Coaches may complete formal coaching cycles with the teacher,

or they may partake in informal coaching practices. Informal coaching practices could include

finding resources for the teacher, co-planning a lesson, or modeling a lesson, to name a few. In

SCC models, the coaching structure varies in an effort to help teachers do what is needed to

improve student performance.

The differentiated coaching model is the best choice for schools and districts that are both

implementing new strategies and focusing on specific areas of student achievement. While all

coaching models have a goal to improve student achievement, the differentiated coaching model recognizes that some teachers may need to be coached in using a specific strategy, while other teachers may need to focus on designing better assessments to check student achievement. The differentiated coaching model provides more flexibility to the school and district to meet the individual needs of the teachers while working toward student growth.

Unlike many traditional PD methods, instructional coaching is not a one-size-fits-all remedy to what ails the educational system. To ensure that instructional coaching programs are successful, there should not be a standardized definition of instructional coaching or a single model for school usage. School districts need to have the flexibility to identify the best coaching model for achieving their improvement goals. Once the district's goals have been identified, the school leaders must thoroughly design a coaching program with clearly defined roles and responsibilities for the coaches. School administrators need to support the coaching program and allow coaches to work with teachers in a non-evaluative manner. Instructional coaching should never be seen as a punishment or a way to fix the teacher. School leaders have a responsibility to encourage teachers to utilize coaching as a form of professional learning. School leaders must also realize that coaching programs may need to change over time. A district that begins with a teacher-centered model may change to a student-centered model once the desired initiative has been successfully implemented by teachers. As new teachers are hired, a differentiated coaching model may need to be employed. If instructional coaching programs are designed well and viewed as personalized professional learning for all teachers, students will be the benefactors of the improved school system.

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