COACHING CONVERSATIONS ABOUT LITERACY IN A TITLE I SCHOOL

Presenters
Donna Brown,
Instructional Coach
and
Sue Chapman,
Instructional Supervisor
About the Presenters

Donna Brown is an Instructional Coach for English Language Arts and Social Studies at Clear Creek ISD. She has over 24 years in education as a teacher, presenter, and instructional coach. Donna began coaching at the elementary level and now in the intermediate level. She is currently working on supporting 1:1 technology initiative through coaching conversations. Donna is also pursuing the Agency Trainer certificate for Cognitive Coaching℠. A belief that she holds is that strong teachers are grown through strong coaching and all levels of education are supported by coaching. Donna is a wife and mother to three active children that continue to grow her beliefs about public education.

Sue Chapman is the Instructional Supervisor at McWhirter Elementary PDLS in Clear Creek ISD. She has 38 years of experience as a teacher, instructional coach, district curriculum coordinator, university instructor, and facilitator of professional learning. She is the author of a number of articles about professional learning including Building Community: Fourth-Grade Team Reaches through Classroom Walls to Collaborate in the April 2014 issue of JSD. Sue serves on the Learning Forward Texas Board of Directors.
Thinking about your school’s literacy program, what might be some.....

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pluses</th>
<th>Wishes</th>
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“Exceptional school leaders succeed because of how they use their time: what they do, and how and when they do it.”

~ Paul Bambrick-Santoyo
Outcomes

• Awareness of coaching possibilities within a Title I school structure focusing on balanced literacy.

• Describe the use of coaching, collaboration, consulting, and evaluation to support growth in literacy.

• Develop a plan that administrators, support staff, coaches, and teachers can use to implement a coaching model in their own school.
Prioritize Coaching Needs

1. Survey staff
2. Learning Walks
3. Observations
4. Create chart based upon gathered data for:

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<tr>
<th>High Support</th>
<th>Medium Support</th>
<th>Minimum Support</th>
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Journal

Based upon current data about your school, how might you classify your staff members’ possible coaching needs?
Coaching Timelines

Instructional coaching activities can include a series of conversations, strategies, moves, or modeling to support a teacher. Throughout the coaching process the coach always questions the effectiveness of his or her work. How do we move teachers’ instructional practices forward in an efficient manner, making sure that improved student learning is the result? How do we install quality-based best practices within the short timeframe of an academic year? Can a teacher who is struggling truly make enough progress to impact student achievement? These are questions I have struggled with as a coach on two diverse campuses.

There are many coaching models which demonstrate the long term impact of instructional coaching on teacher practice and student achievement (Joyce & Showers, 2002). However, schools need application of professional learning to occur quickly and consistently in order to positively impact student growth. Waiting a few months or even a year to change instructional practice carries an unacceptable penalty for students, especially students who are struggling.

As a beginning coach, I sat beside teachers in their classrooms, making suggestions for new ways to support student learning. When I went back to observe in these classrooms, I noticed that teachers frequently reverted back to their previous practices and did not implement their new learning. Teachers need coaching in support of their internal thought processes, not just their behaviors if they are to make personal sense of and internalize new teaching practices. Costa and Garmston (2002) designed Cognitive Coaching to build self-directedness through coaching conversations intended to support teachers’ thinking. These structured conversations help to change practice at a deeper level because the focus remains on cognition rather than behavior. Cognitive Coaching results in lasting and meaningful change but the process requires an investment of time. So how does a coach support true change in a timely fashion rather than putting out “fires” of ineffective
practices? The coach needs a plan, one that is built upon gradual release to support teacher and student ownership for learning and self-directedness. A coaching timeline can provide just such a plan.

By following a timeline and helping a teacher craft one specific goal, measureable outcomes that support student learning can be achieved. Instructional shifts with lasting impact can be made. Research has shown that when teachers or schools focus on multiple professional learning initiatives, the impact of these initiatives is severely limited (Hirsh & Killion, 2007). Coaches who implement a timeline-based plan can help teachers focus on a single goal and make lasting improvements in instruction and student achievement.

“It is only when we develop others that we permanently succeed.”

~Harvey S. Firestone
**Sample of a Daily Timeline**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Monday</th>
<th>Tuesday</th>
<th>Wednesday</th>
<th>Thursday</th>
<th>Friday</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3/4</td>
<td>Teacher practices strategy independently for one to two weeks. Coach is available before or after lessons to conduct informal coaching conversations.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Coach observes lesson.</td>
<td>Coach meets with teacher to reflect on observation and set new goals to refine practice.</td>
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</table>
STEPS TO COACHING ON A TIMELINE

SET-UP
1. Observe teacher during practice with students.
2. Gather data on student achievement.
3. Meet with teacher and have a reflecting conversation the next day.
4. From understandings of observation and conversation, develop goals for students and teachers.
5. Collaborate with the teacher on when and how the coaching process will take place.

MODELING and CO-TEACHING
1. Plan a lesson to teach in the classroom. Have teacher listen and ask questions about the thinking and planning process.
2. Model the practice in the classroom. The teacher takes notes on a blank observation form.
3. Model practice again using methods such as freeze or voicing over to help the teacher understand the meta-cognition behind the coaching moves.
4. Plan a co-teach lesson with the teacher. Divide the lesson into parts. Have the teacher script the words of the coach.
5. Co-teach with teacher over a period of two to three lessons on consecutive days until teacher has ownership of all parts of the lesson.
6. The teacher teaches the lesson as the coach whispers in to the teacher for support.
7. On a daily basis, the coach paraphrases and poses a meditative question at the end of each lesson for an informal reflecting conversation.

REFLECTION
1. Observe the teacher during practice with students. The coach collects data on the established goals.
2. Meet with the teacher and have a reflecting conversation on the entire process, focusing on the goals and measurements set out in the beginning.
COACHING REMINDERS

1. The first observation is critical for deciding on the zone of proximal development of the teacher’s practice. It is important that the established goal stretches the teacher’s practice, but not is so far out of reach that the teacher feels the goal is unobtainable.

2. The entire process should not last more than 4 to 6 weeks. Two weeks is a preferred timeline for the model and co-teaching. Then allow one to two weeks for the teacher to have independent practice with informal coaching as needed.

3. Explain coaching moves to the teacher during the planning phase. The teacher should understand ahead of time, how the coach and teacher will interact during modeling and co-teaching.

4. Consider setting dates and times on the calendar for the entire timeline. This will support the teacher in knowing the coach’s investment in the teacher.

5. Learn, think, and wonder aloud as you model the lessons on the desired goals. This helps the teacher see the work you are doing as you instruct students. Leaving this process out can cause the teacher to just copycat the lesson over and over without honestly seeing or hearing the decision making process happening during teaching. This metacognition plays an important part in the teacher’s understanding of the instructional strategy.

6. The ultimate goal of coaching is for the teacher to be independently successful with the goal. At the end of the cycle the teacher may not have “mastered” the entire instructional practice. The teacher may express a need to move forward in the learning of the practice. Give the teacher two weeks to practice independently towards obtaining the goal. If needed, craft a new goal with the teacher which will support deeper understanding of practice.

7. It is also important that the independent practice time is embedded into the schedule. Teachers need to practice new skill sets so a deeper level of understanding can be built. Each day of practice builds the teacher’s strength and fluency with the new skill. Students approach learning differently each day. Therefore, the teacher must be able to adapt the practice to new situations. When the new skill set is done with automaticity, the teacher can decide on a new professional learning goal.
## Individual Coaching Plan and Timeline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Answer</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What are the individual needs/goals for student growth?</td>
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<tr>
<td>What strategies might the teacher need?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Who is responsible for supporting this teacher?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How can this be scheduled in a 4 to 6 week timeframe?</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
# Sandi’s Coaching Plan and Timeline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What are the individual needs/goals for student growth?</th>
<th>Increase reading level of below level students.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What strategies might the teacher need?</td>
<td>Support with logistics of guided reading which included running records, choosing teaching points and text selection.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| Who is responsible for supporting this teacher?       | **Literacy Coach** – Using gradual release, model then support the teacher through guided reading lessons.  
**Grade Level Chair** - Invite teacher to observe guided reading lessons and schedule discussions on guided reading at team meetings |
| How can this be scheduled in a 4 to 6 week timeframe? | Week 1- Coaching conversations, observations, & models  
Week 2 & 3 – Continue models and begin co-teaching  
Week 4- Use Coaching conversations for planning and reflecting  
Week 5- Teacher continues practice on her own.  
Week 6- Observe teaching and reflect over process. Plan for next steps. |
### Norissa’s Coaching Plan and Timeline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What are the individual needs/goals for student growth?</th>
<th>Develop comprehension skills of bilingual students.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What strategies might the teacher need?</td>
<td>Use preview/review model for mini-lesson and teaching share during Reading Workshop.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| Who is responsible for supporting this teacher?       | **Literacy Coach** – Model mini-lesson and teaching share.  
**Bilingual Staff Developer** – Provide strategies for bilingual students to bridge the gap between English and Spanish. |
| How can this be scheduled in a 4 to 6 week timeframe?  | Week 1-Coaching conversations, observations, & models  
Week 2 & 3 –Co-teach with teacher. Use freeze frame and whispering in during lessons.  
Week 4-Use Coaching conversations for planning and reflecting while teacher practices in the classroom on her own.  
Week 5-Observed teaching and reflect over process. Plan for next steps. |
References


Joyce, B., & Showers, B. (2002). *Student achievement through staff development.* (3rd ed.), ASCD.


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