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EDUCATOR-CENTERED
INSTRUCTIONAL COACHING
PRACTICES THAT WORK
Lessons from PIIC Research

ELLIOTT MEDRICH AND IVAN CHARNER

EDUCATOR-CENTERED INSTRUCTIONAL COACHING PRACTICES THAT WORK:

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Elliott Medrich and Ivan Charner¹

Schools typically devote between two and five percent of their budgets to staff professional development. For states, this often translates to expenditures of hundreds of thousands, or even millions of dollars in the aggregate. Given the scale of the professional development enterprise, it should come as no surprise that educators at all levels of governance and administration are continually looking for ways to improve the return on investment for each professional development dollar they spend.

Pennsylvania has looked carefully at how it funds professional development. One outcome of this appraisal is that the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) has considered both traditional and new approaches to professional development. Among the new approaches, PDE has embraced instructional coaching—a significant break from the traditional one-and-done approach to professional development. This statewide effort has taken professional development in a new direction by building a cadre of instructional coaches in districts, and schools who are supported by mentors (the coach’s coach) from Intermediate Units (IUs). This initiative has been led by the Pennsylvania Institute for Instructional Coaching (PIIC) in partnership with PDE and the Annenberg Foundation.

The impact of PIIC’s effort has been examined on a continuing basis over the past seven years. PIIC supports an ongoing research program, designed to understand how coaches are trained, how they do their work in the schools, and how their work has changed teaching and learning in classrooms. The lessons presented in this report may be useful to state education departments, regional education associations, districts, and schools that are currently implementing instructional coaching or that are considering doing so in the future.

Since 2009, PIIC researchers have conducted more than 50 studies and analyses. The research base is both broad and deep. The mix of methods employed include trend and longitudinal surveys, case studies, secondary data analyses, interviews, focus groups, classroom and school observations, document review, and analysis of state-, district- and school-level data. Taken together, these many studies offer a clear picture of the terrain that defines fundamental skill sets associated with instructional coaching and mentoring. An important product of the research is the opportunity to describe practices that are associated with *effective* coaching. These practices are the subject of this report.

¹ Elliott Medrich is a Research Consultant to the Pennsylvania Institute for Instructional Coaching (PIIC). Ivan Charner is the Director of the FHI 360 National Institute for Work and Learning which has a research agreement with PIIC.

A backwards mapping strategy has been deployed—research findings are used to identify practices that are central to effective coaching. Essentially, this argument states, to have effective instructional coaching certain practices should be in evidence. If a coach or mentor is prepared in each practice, she or he is positioned to work effectively with teachers (individually or in groups) and help them improve their instructional practice. In other words, you are ready to coach or to mentor if you are well versed in each of the practices. Thus, through instructional coaching, professional development achieves its promise—professional learning.

This is not to say that these are the only practices that coaches and mentors must master, but these are foundational practices—the difference between being ready for the role of coach and not being ready. Once coaches or mentors master these practices, they have the tools that are necessary to do the work.

This report leaves the question of “how” coaches acquire skills to other sources, such as our new book *Instructional Coaching in Action: An Integrated Approach That Transforms Thinking, Practice, and Schools*²; and PIIC’s online instructional coaching resource guide.³ We use our research to focus here on important skill sets and practices that emerge from our data.

² Eisenberg, E.B., Eisenberg, B.P., Medrich, E.A., & Charner, I. (2017, May). *Instructional Coaching in Action: An Integrated Approach That Transforms Thinking, Practice, and Schools*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.

³ <http://www.instituteforinstructionalcoaching.org/>

MENTOR PRACTICES

Practice: Mentors support coaches from many different specialties, trained in many different ways, providing professional development and professional learning that is essential to their work.

Documentation:

Almost two-thirds of coaches met one-on-one with their mentor in 2014–15 school year and almost all of the coaches attended mentor-led coaching meeting in that same school year. **1**⁴

Eighty percent or more of coaches reported that mentors addressed the following topics in their meetings—implementing the Before-During-After (BDA), applying reflective practice, building collaborative environment among teachers, and using appropriate literacy strategies. **1**

Mentors facilitate networking meetings among coaches to share best practices, resources, materials, and address coaching challenges related to working with teachers around classroom instruction. **5**

Mentors model evidence-based literacy practices, research-based instructional techniques, and use of technology for coaches. **1**

Mentors use multiple strategies in their interactions with coaches, including: providing informational or research articles related to instructional strategies or coaching practice; providing curricular materials such as activities, lessons, and assessments; suggesting formats for coaches' meetings with teachers, e.g., "breakfast club" or book club; modeling Penn Literacy Network (PLN) strategies in group meetings; encouraging coaches to share strategies and lessons learned with one another; meeting one-on-one with coaches before and after the coach's meeting with a teacher; visiting coaches during one-on-one meetings with teachers; visiting coaches modeling instructional techniques in a teacher's classroom; asking probing questions on coach's successes and challenges with particular teachers; and soliciting coaches' input on the content and direction of mentoring sessions. **4**

Mentor Focus Group Reflection: In the focus group study, mentors reported that they provide professional development and professional learning opportunities for coaches in group meetings, during one-on-one sessions, and at the quarterly PIIC Professional Learning Opportunity (PLO) events. Further, they suggested that by working with mentors, coaches gain confidence in their practice. Mentors confirm this to be the case when they visit coaches working with teachers. **5**

Implications:

Mentors provide coaches with support that would be otherwise unavailable to them. Mentors offer coaches a professional development and professional learning platform that assures their continuing growth on the job. Mentors need time to do their work with coaches: time for one-on-one and group meetings, time for Professional Development (PD), and time for responding to information requests. Mentors differentiate support for coaches based on coaches' levels of experience and each coach's particular school situation.

⁴ The bold numbers are the references for each data source found on pages 21-22.

Practice: Mentors understand the fundamentals of coaching and help coaches learn how to be effective in their practice.

Documentation:

Mentors model practices for coaches and provide them with professional learning opportunities that enables coaches to grow as professionals. **2**

Mentors provide a structure for supporting coaches. The two tiers together, mentoring and coaching, works like a system of nested dolls—mentors to coaches, coaches to teachers. **2**

When mentors were asked to identify areas of knowledge and skill they used in their work, 67 percent said coaching strategies, 33 percent said the (BDA) cycle of coaching consultation, and 17 percent said understanding adult learning. **3**

In many IUs, the mentor was the main source of professional development for coaches. **6**

“If not for mentors, coaches would be on their own just like teachers.” **5**

Coaches reported the following changes in their practice as a result of working with their mentor: sharing specific strategies and resources with teachers that were provided by their mentor (56 percent); collaborating with other coaches (52 percent); greater motivation and confidence in their practice because of mentor support (47 percent); and reflecting more effectively on their coaching practice (45 percent). **1**

Mentor Focus Group Reflection: The mentor focus groups suggested that the PIIC model of instructional coaching was essential in working with coaches. Mentors focus on the challenges coaches face and how to address those challenges using the PIIC framework. **5**

Implications:

When new coaches arrive on the job they come from different backgrounds and they have had different classroom and school experiences. Mentors introduce coaches to the fundamentals of their role, help coaches understand the instructional coaching framework, and help them master the basic skill set of instructional coaching. Then, on a continuing basis, mentors provide coaches with professional development—individually and in group settings—that is essential to becoming effective as a coach in the long run. Mentors provide critical linkages—they support the induction of new coaches and offer ongoing professional learning for all that enables coaches to develop effective practice.

Practice: Mentors help coaches build creative, positive, and productive relationships with teachers—essential to successful outcomes.

Documentation:

Coaches report that mentors provide them with strategies and resources that they can use directly as they work with teachers. **1**

School administrators noted that mentors offer professional development, share resources, and help coaches address specific issues that arise with teachers. One administrator explained that *“our coaches call the mentor to get ideas and to troubleshoot problems they are having.”* **2**

Sixty-seven percent of the mentors noted that their primary challenge is understanding the needs of the coaches they work with. **3**

“Coaches see me as an advocate, as I have been called into schools to present to faculty about the nature of coaching and the role of the coach. I am an advocate that explains what a coach does and does not do, and I help them clarify their roles.” **4**

Mentor Focus Group Reflection: In the mentor focus group study, there was agreement that coaches have different roles, responsibilities, and challenges in their schools and that the mentors help them develop strong relationships with teachers in their schools. The mentors also reported that understanding how adults learn was essential to building strong and lasting relationships with teachers. As one mentor noted, *“one of the things that we do is teach them how to teach adults, whether it’s through professional development or one-on-one interactions.”* **5**

Implications:

Building good relationships with teachers, individually and in groups, is a key to effective coaching. Mentors help coaches understand that one size does not fit all. Mentors offer coaches a wide range of resources, tools, and strategies, that each coach can “fit” to their own circumstance. Effective mentors are agile and adaptable. They are comfortable with school leaders and they draw on their own experience to help coaches identify strategies that will build support for coaching across school staff.

Practice: Mentors help build teams of coaches within schools, districts, and the IU. They provide a listening ear, and serve as confidant and sounding board for coaches.

Documentation:

In one district, coaches attended twice monthly coaches' meetings, led by the IU Mentor, where they received training and networked with their peers. The mentor was the main source of information on coaching for many coaches in the IU. The mentor helps coaches manage their time and prioritize their responsibilities. **6**

Nearly all the coaches interviewed for one study indicated that they spoke with their mentor at least monthly, and many spoke with their mentor on a weekly basis. Most mentors held monthly meetings with coaches and many mentors met periodically with coaches individually. **4**

Almost all the coaches surveyed in 2014–15 attended IU mentor-held meetings, with most reporting that they attended more than four IU mentor-held meetings during the school year. Many topics were covered in these meetings, including implementing the BDA cycle of coaching, applying reflective practice, building a collaborative environment among teachers, and using appropriate literacy strategies. More important, as a direct result of these meetings, over half of the coaches changed their practice. **1**

It was noted in interviews that coaches value one role of mentors particularly: facilitating opportunities for coaches to get together and talk about coaching, which they don't otherwise have a chance to do. **8**

Much of what coaches were positive about in their relationship with the IU mentor was having someone to talk to about day-to-day issues, such as the coach's role, how to respond to pressure to perform non-coaching roles, and scheduling. That mentors are not supervisors or evaluators is important to their capacity to fulfill this confidential role. One coach said, *"I see the mentor as a shoulder to cry on. She is not evaluative at all, but someone to collaborate with and bounce ideas off of."* **4**

Mentor Focus Group Reflection: In the mentor focus groups, it was suggested that they serve multiple roles related to coaches and coaching. They provide coaches with skill, knowledge, and strategies; they work with groups of coaches to help them learn with and from each other; and they collaborate with coaches one-on-one to address challenges. Mentors also stated that in addition to their professional development and learning role they served an important personal support function for many coaches, as well. As one mentor noted during the discussion: *"We can see growth in our own coaches because we (mentors) provided them with the scaffolds and supports that they need. ...that's how we're making a difference for our coaches."* **5**

Implications:

Mentors provide coaches with ongoing professional learning opportunities. Meetings that mentors convene with coaches—whether in groups or individually—enrich the coaches' knowledge base, and provide coaches with skills that are essential to their role. Mentors also deal with the nuts and bolts of coaching: they help coaches problem solve, manage their time, and address issues large and small that the coaches encounter every day. Easy access to the professional development and coaching content provided by the mentor, is a fundamental element of the coaches' support system. Another element of that system is the social and psychological support that mentors offer.

Practice: Mentors build relationships with principals and school leaders, help administrators understand the coaches' role, and help coaches overcome obstacles to effective coaching practices.

Documentation:

One study of the mentors' role found that mentors worked with building and district administrators to help them understand the coaches' role and facilitated conversations between coaches and administrators. As one coach reported, *"The mere presence of an IU mentor was enough to allay some concerns or misconceptions by administrators. The fact that there is a mentor at IU level shows administrators that this is something that's important."* 4

Mentors supported coaches in a number of ways: they provided research, facilitated conversations between coaches and administrators, and met with administrators to explain the way coaching can be aligned to the school mission. The impact of this support could be immediate and discernible. 4

My role, explained one IU mentor, *"is to help the administrators understand coaching and to support the coaches."* The mentor conducted kickoff meetings with administrators and coaches in schools at the start of each school year. The mentor met with coaches and administrators to help them think through issues like these: "How do I use my coach? What's appropriate and what is not?" The mentor helped administrators and coaches establish parameters of the coaching role. 6

As one of the Regional Mentor Coordinators stated, *"Mentors need to work effectively with administrators and respect the boundaries of their role."* 7

Mentor Focus Group Reflection: In the focus group study the mentors all talked about the important role of principals and school administrators to the success of coaching. The mentors identified challenges and strategies they used to communicate with principals to help them understand coaching, specifically the PIIC model of instructional coaching. In describing the relationship with principals and administrators, one mentor put it this way: *"You need to be able to advocate; you need to be able to articulate what the model looks like; and you need to be able to do it in a way that makes sense to district leaders and to building principals. You're going to approach those groups in different ways."* 5

Implications:

Coaches need principals and school leaders to support their work. School leaders set the tone, and coaches are more likely to thrive when the school leader is "on their side." Mentors are often called upon to explain the coaches' role to principals and school leaders. Further, mentors are recognized for their expertise—often showing school leaders how coaches can contribute to achieving the school's mission.

Practice: Mentors are a source of information about programs promoted by the IU(s) and PDE. They provide an opportunity for coaches to learn from and get support from outside of their school and district.

Documentation:

Mentors provide coaches with an outside perspective. They share IU and PDE resources a coach might not come across otherwise. **9**

In a study of the role of mentors, it was noted that many of the mentors worked on wider school-reform efforts at the IU level which gives them a broader perspective on IU and state-level programs that they can share with coaches. **4**

Through the mentor position, PIIC created a direct conduit between coaches and the IU. Coaches receive information about state-level development through the mentor. For example, mentors helped coaches understand ways of working with teachers around core standards, and the new teacher evaluation system. **6**

Mentor Focus Group Reflection: During the focus groups, the mentors reported that in addition to working on issues of instructional coaching, they provide information and professional development on programs and services available through the IUs and PDE. A number of mentors also suggested that bringing an external lens to schools and districts on programs, professional development, and teaching and learning issues was important. One mentor put it this way: *“We end up being a conduit of information that I don’t know that (coaches) would get any other way... Coaching is not really focused on IU-related PD, but that’s what we end up doing some of the time -- embedded with coaching of course.”* **5**

Implications:

The IU plays a central role in the structure of the coaching initiative and mentors wear several IU hats at the same time. Their knowledge of the IU and of PDE programs and priorities, enables the mentor to offer coaches a unique perspective on IU and state-wide activities. Mentors bring a wide variety of IU and state-level resources to the attention of coaches. Further, by virtue of their exposure to coaches at the school level, mentors often provide feedback to the IU on how schools with coaches are operationalizing state-mandated and IU programs. This feedback loop is a unique phenomenon -- a linkage that is rarely achieved from one school administrative level to another.

Practice: Mentors network among peers and provide one another continuing opportunities to bolster their skills and competencies.

Documentation:

Over half (57 percent) of the mentors who had been mentoring for more than one year reported that they often collaborated with other mentors. **3**

Almost all of the first-year mentors reported that they worked with other mentors in their region to share PD, coaches' meeting ideas, and problems of practice. **3**

Mentor Focus Group Reflection: One of the strongest points mentors made during the focus groups was how essential the mentor network and the mentor-to-mentor relationships are to their own professional development, their practice, and their support for coaches and administrators. They suggested that mentors need each other because they bring different areas of expertise to the table. The mentors put it this way: *"We can't do our job well without a network. It's knowing that I can pick up the phone and email any of the other mentors in the state and pick their brains and brainstorm. Take away the support and mentor-to-mentor interaction and this coaching initiative becomes just like everything else."* **5**

Implications:

One of the most important contributions of the mentoring system is that it enables mentors to share knowledge with one another, and provide opportunities to draw on their individual and collective skills and competencies. As with any professional role, mentors need professional learning opportunities of their own. The opportunities that mentor-peers have to work together helps them become more knowledgeable and identify new ways to support the coaches and administrators with whom they work.

COACH PRACTICES

Practice: Coaches advocate for, plan, and deliver onsite professional development in schools.

Documentation:

Ninety-four percent of coaches provided one-on-one coaching to teachers. Ninety-four percent provided small-group or whole school coaching during the 2014–15 school year. **1**

Coaches devoted a significant portion of their time to working individually with teachers. The most common topics addressed in one-on-one coaching sessions in 2014–15 were the essential elements of the PIIC framework: using appropriate literacy strategies (84 percent), using data for instructional improvement (80 percent), and applying reflective practice (55 percent). Coaches reported providing small group and whole school coaching on using data for instructional improvement (80 percent), using appropriate literacy strategies (78 percent), and applying reflective practice (34 percent). **1**

Other examples of PD included: short programs on formative assessment; helping teachers write Student Learning Objectives (SLOs); explaining text dependent analysis; helping content area teachers with English Language Arts (ELA); helping science and mathematics teachers involve more writing in their projects; helping teachers organize Project-Based Learning (PBL) projects; addressing new standards; helping teachers working with bubble students; helping teachers master fundamentals of close reading; and helping students write constructive responses. **8**

By leading whole-school professional development sessions, and one-on-one and small-group meetings, coaches play a major role in rolling out new initiatives or programs at the school-wide level. **9**

Principals relied on coaches as the primary source of job-embedded professional development for teachers. Having a go-to professional development resource was vital to achieving school goals. **6**

“There is endless demand for PD in my school. I wish there was a more efficient way to do PD, but I have come to realize that part of the job of being a coach means always adding to my list. It makes me feel good when teachers look to me to meet their PD needs. It’s actually the only way they really get PD that helps them.” **8**

Implications:

Coaches are well positioned to understand the PD needs of school staff, and they are well equipped to deliver PD that is tailored to meet the unique needs of their schools and the teachers in the schools. Coaches are often called upon to 1) help school leaders determine what PD should be offered, and 2) execute the one-on-one, small-group and whole school professional development programs they plan. Coaches strive to integrate professional learning offerings and align them with the school’s mission.

Practice: Coaches understand that helping teachers improve instruction onsite is central to their role.

Documentation:

A majority of teachers (84 percent) reported that they have changed their instructional practice as a result of coaching they received. Sixty-one percent were more willing to try new instructional techniques. A majority of coaches reported seeing teachers change their classroom practices as a result of both one-on-one and small group coaching. Many coaches reported seeing changes in the following as a result of one-on-one coaching: engaging students more effectively (67 percent), focusing more on literacy and using higher level literacy strategies (57 percent), and using data to make decisions about instruction (38 percent). Similar changes in practices resulted from small group coaching. **1**

In a follow-up study of teachers coached originally in 2012–13, 89 percent of teachers reported that their instructional practice had changed as a result of the instructional coaching they received. **11**

Instructional coaching was valuable (some or a lot) for professional learning for 80 percent of teachers who were followed up five years after being coached. Specifically, 75 percent of the teachers who were one-on-one coached and 86 percent of those who were coached in small group setting valued these types of professional learning. **11**

*“I want to be a great coach and help every teacher become a great teacher. I say this to myself every day. I want to do much more than I am able. There is a big difference between what I hope for and what I can do. It would be great if someday I can make the pieces come together so that my teachers practice in ways that make every student successful in the classroom. PIIC has set a high bar for me. I am grateful for that.” **8***

Implications:

Instructional coaching changes teachers and changes classroom. Overwhelmingly teachers recognize that coaching helps them improve their practice and instruction in ways that have a direct impact on student engagement and learning. In particular, teachers who are coached one-on-one place high value on coaching as a process that supports their professional learning.

Practice: Coaches help teachers improve their instructional practice, which our research shows increases student engagement and improves student learning.

Documentation:

In a 2016–17 follow up survey of teachers who were coached in 2012–13, 89 percent reported that their classroom practice changed as a result of working with a PIIC instructional coach. These teachers who reported that their practice had changed also said that the changes in their classroom practice had a positive impact of student engagement (100 percent). In addition, almost all teachers noted that the changes in classroom practice had a positive impact on student learning (97 percent).

11

A quantitative study of instructional coaching found that students were more likely to attend classes taught by coached teachers than were students in classes of teachers that were not coached.

12

Another quantitative study of instructional coaching found significantly better performance on standardized tests, over a three-year period, among students at an elementary school with a full-time coach, as compared with the performance of students at two demographically similar schools, that did not have coaching. **13**

The impact of instruction on student learning included improvements in students’ ability to make connections to prior learning, deeper understanding of concepts, improvement in the quality of writing, and thinking more broadly about course material. **1**

Implications:

The objective of instructional coaching is to help teachers improve their instructional practice. In turn, teachers report that changes in practice lead to improvement in student engagement and student learning. Both coaches and teachers recognize that job-embedded, one-on-one, and small group professional development is a powerful way to affect change in classrooms. The changes in students include improved attendance, increased engagement, and improved achievement.

Practice: Coaches design long range professional development strategies that complement the school’s mission and instructional plan.

Documentation:

In a follow-up survey five years after being coached, 80 percent of teachers reported that instructional coaching made a valuable contribution to their professional learning. Specifically, 75 percent of the teachers who were coached one-on-one and 86 percent of those who were coached in a small group setting valued these types of professional learning. This is compared with 49 percent, 50 percent, and 28 percent who valued IU, district-wide, and statewide professional development, respectively. **11**

In one study, almost all principals who were interviewed cited the commitment to instructional excellence as the primary reason for implementing instructional coaching. To achieve school goals administrators turned to coaches as a means to “align curriculum and build the capacity of teachers.” **2**

In that same study, all of the principals reported that their coaches were heavily involved in planning and delivering building level professional development. These principals said that one goal for coaching is to lead and support professional development. **2**

Instructional coaching is not a practice that can be viewed in isolation. At its best, it supports a quality instructional program in a school. In one of our studies, 83 percent of teachers who were often coached one-on-one, as compared with 42 percent of those who were not coached one-on-one report that coaches are a catalyst for learning among staff members at their school. **14**

Implications:

Coaches play a significant role in planning and executing professional development. They conduct PD in different ways in schools: one-on-one with teachers, in small groups, and school-wide for all teachers. Their work supports school leaders and the school mission, and offers a distinct counterpoint to traditional one-and-done professional development. Most important, teachers report that instructional coaching is well suited to helping them meet their learning goals for students.

Practice: Coaches work onsite with principals and school leaders to foster support for instructional coaching.

Documentation:

In 2016, 34 percent of coaches reported that building strong relationships with teachers and administrators was among the most important thing they did, and 12 percent said that working cooperatively with administrators was essential. **3**

A commitment to instructional excellence was the primary reason administrators cited for implementing instructional coaching. Pursuing these goals required that coaches and administrators develop strong partnerships balanced with a mix of autonomy, confidentiality, and strategic support. **10**

Administrators believe that coaching had influenced their schools in three ways: stronger instructional practice, gains in student achievement, and cross-curricular collaboration. These administrators relied on coaches to support school goals through school-wide professional development, working with teachers in small groups (grade-level, subject areas), and working with teachers one-on-one. **10**

Whether their coaches were full- or part-time, administrators depended on them to help teaching staff develop professionally. Administrators saw explaining and reinforcing the role of the coach as a crucial part of their own support for instructional coaching. **2**

“A shared vision (with your school community) and a shared understanding of what you will do and how you will do it is essential.” **8**

Implications:

It takes considerable effort to implement effective instructional coaching. Coaches are more likely to be accepted by school staff if school leaders actively promote the work that the coach does and will do. This requires that school leaders and coaches develop a positive message about coaching, -- - how the coach will work with teachers, and how instructional coaching supports the school’s instructional mission. A partnership and collaboration between coaches and school leaders is essential to assuring that the coach achieves a strong relationship with teachers to help them improve classroom instruction, student engagement, and student learning.

Practice: Coaches convene teams of teachers within schools to build instructional skills and teacher capacity.

Documentation:

In one case study, coaches' primary responsibility was to provide school-level training and coaching while promoting consistency in district-level curricula and professional development. In this study, coaches wore many hats in the school building. They ran weekly or monthly whole-school professional development sessions, met individually with teachers and with teachers in grade-level or cross-content groups. Planning for and running whole-school professional development sessions was a major part of coaches' day-to-day work, and principals relied on coaches as the primary source of job-embedded professional development for their teachers. **6** In a few schools, principals adjusted the framework for instructional coaching, focusing more heavily on school-wide professional development and coaching groups of teachers rather than working with teachers one-on-one. In other schools, coaches focused their group work with teachers in subject areas in which students were evaluated on statewide high-stakes assessment. **2** Administrators reported their perceptions that coaching had influenced their school along three broad categories: stronger instructional practice, gains in student achievement, and cross-curricular collaboration. **2**

In one school district, coaches focused on topics like writing across the curriculum, reading comprehension strategies, or using data to improve instruction. The topics for whole-school professional development shifted from year to year as district and school priorities changed. **6**

*“Spend as much time as you need just talking to teachers and getting to understand who they are. This is a key building block to effective coaching. Face time with faculty is a worthwhile investment—don't hide in an office, and don't try or expect teachers to embrace your agenda.” **8***

Implications:

Coaches offer a wide range of professional learning opportunities, all tailored to the unique needs of the school and the teachers they serve. Some coaches focus on one-on-one coaching, others on small groups, some on whole-school professional development, and some on all three. Coaches are by necessity flexible in how they work. There is no single approach that is right in all school settings. Once coaches master the basic coaching skill set, they must then explore to determine what works with individual teachers and different groups of teachers at their site—given what the school leader and teachers would like the coach to accomplish.

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