CT Literacy Conference

Welcome to the Connecticut Literacy Conference

CONNECTICUT Education | CENTRAL SCHOOL OF EDUCATION | UCONN NEAG SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

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Building Educator Capacity, Improving Student Outcomes: *Instructional Coaching in Connecticut's Professional Learning System*

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By the end of this session, participants will be able to answer the following questions:

Professional Learning Systems

- What is a comprehensive, high-quality professional learning system?
- Why is instructional coaching a critical component of a professional learning system?
- What does research say about instructional coaching?

Connecticut (CT) Instructional Coaching Framework

- What is the CT Instructional Coaching Framework?
- How was the CT Instructional Coaching Framework developed?
- What guidance resources are provided within the Framework? (We will preview them today.)

Ice Breaker

When the music stops, find a partner (or two):

1. Introduce yourself: name, school/district/college, role
2. Think about an impactful professional learning experience that made a lasting change to your instructional practice. Discuss:
   - **What made it so impactful?**
   - **What helped the learning transfer into classroom instruction?**

Consider: content collaboration
feedback opportunity to practice

Center for Literacy Research and Reading Success



Professional Learning System

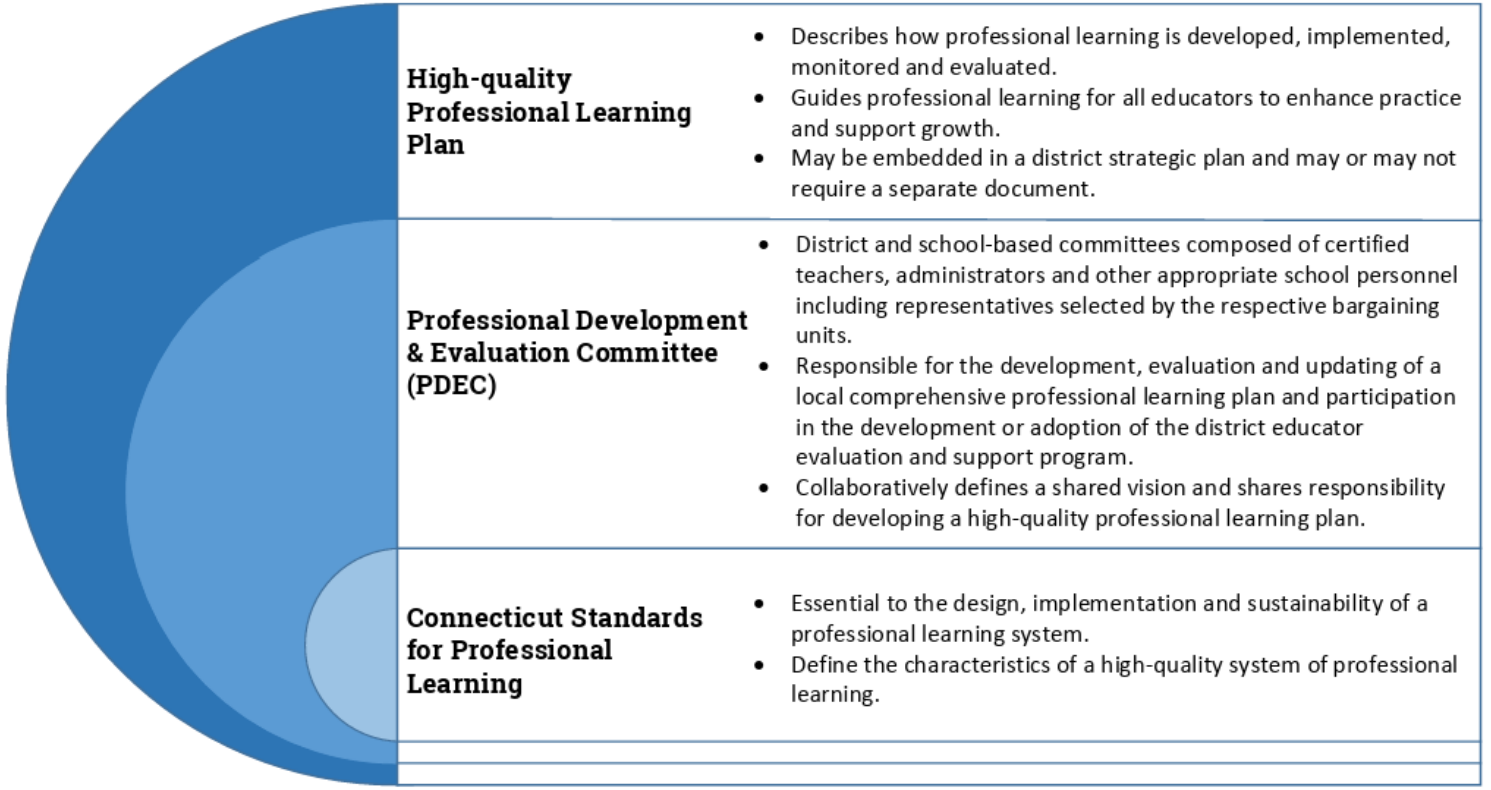
Coherent, aligned, and focused on growth

Standards and Curriculum	Teacher Education and Mentoring (TEAM) Program	Educator Evaluation and Support	Preparation and Certification	District Training	Professional Learning Communities (PLCs)	Instructional Coaching

Professional learning is **intensive** and **sustained continuous improvement** for educators that is **aligned to standards**, is **conducted among educators**, **occurs frequently**, and includes a repository of **best practices for teaching methods** developed by educators (C.G.S. 10-148a).

A High-Quality Professional Learning System

This graphic demonstrates how a sustainable system for professional learning integrates three interdependent elements. High-quality professional learning systems are designed using a set of standards as the foundation. Professional Development and Evaluation Committees (PDECs) use those standards to define and expand upon a shared vision and share the responsibility for designing a comprehensive professional learning plan. The high-quality professional learning plan describes the opportunities for educators to engage in meaningful learning that improves and/or enhances practice.



High-quality Professional Learning Plan	• Describes how professional learning is developed, implemented, monitored and evaluated. • Guides professional learning for all educators to enhance practice and support growth. • May be embedded in a district strategic plan and may or may not require a separate document.
Professional Development & Evaluation Committee (PDEC)	• District and school-based committees composed of certified teachers, administrators and other appropriate school personnel including representatives selected by the respective bargaining units. • Responsible for the development, evaluation and updating of a local comprehensive professional learning plan and participation in the development or adoption of the district educator evaluation and support program. • Collaboratively defines a shared vision and shares responsibility for developing a high-quality professional learning plan.
Connecticut Standards for Professional Learning	• Essential to the design, implementation and sustainability of a professional learning system. • Define the characteristics of a high-quality system of professional learning.

Cultural Competence	Professional learning that enhances both educator practice and outcomes for each and every student facilitates educators' self-examination of their awareness, knowledge, skills, and actions that pertain to culture and how they can develop culturally-responsive strategies to enrich the educational experiences for all students.
Learning Communities	Professional learning that enhances both educator practice and outcomes for each and every student occurs within learning communities committed to continuous growth, collective responsibility, family and community engagement and alignment of district and school vision and goals
Leadership	Professional learning that enhances both educator practice and outcomes for each and every student requires and develops leadership capacity at all levels to advocate for and create systems for professional learning.
Resources	Professional learning that enhances both educator practice and outcomes for each and every student requires purposeful planning for the identification, coordination, monitoring, evaluation, and equitable use and allocation of resources to support educator learning.
Data	Professional learning that enhances both educator practice and outcomes for each and every student requires the use of both quantitative and qualitative student, educator and system data to plan, implement, monitor and assess professional learning.
Learning Designs	Professional learning that enhances both educator practice and outcomes for each and every student integrates research on effective adult learning and uses flexible learning designs to achieve intended outcomes.
Implementation	Professional learning that enhances both educator practice and outcomes for each and every student applies change research and uses tools to identify and support the developmental stages of change and ensures the fidelity of implementation.
Outcomes	Professional learning that enhances both educator practice and outcomes for each and every student is aligned with district/school goals, relevant Connecticut standards, and other agreed-upon standards for educator practice and student growth.

Reflection

With a neighbor, share what professional learning looks like in your school or district.

- Who designs and leads professional learning?
- How are professional learning topics chosen and communicated?
- Do instructional coaches operate in your context? If so, what is their primary role, and who do they work with most?
- What is working well, and what would you change?

How Does Instructional Coaching Fit into the System?

Depends on whether the district has coaches at all

Depends on what the role requires locally

Depends on whether district leaders, principals, teachers, and coaches share a vision

Stop and Jot

On a scale of 1-5, rate how impactful instructional coaching is within your professional learning system?



Research Jigsaw Activity

1. Count off by four.

2. Gather with the others in your group.
   - Skim and scan the *DRAFT* Research Brief.
   - Consider 2-3 key highlights that resonate with you.
   - Share with the group; allow each person a chance to share.

3. While you are working, you will be assigned a color…

1. Gather with new color group.

2. Each person will share:
   - the research questions that their *DRAFT* Research Brief answered.
   - 2-3 key highlights from their *DRAFT* Research Brief.

What Does Research Say About Instructional Coaching?

Accelerates teacher development, producing gains comparable to 5-10 years of classroom experience in a much shorter time frame (Kraft, Blazar, & Hogan, 2018; Booker & Russell, 2022).

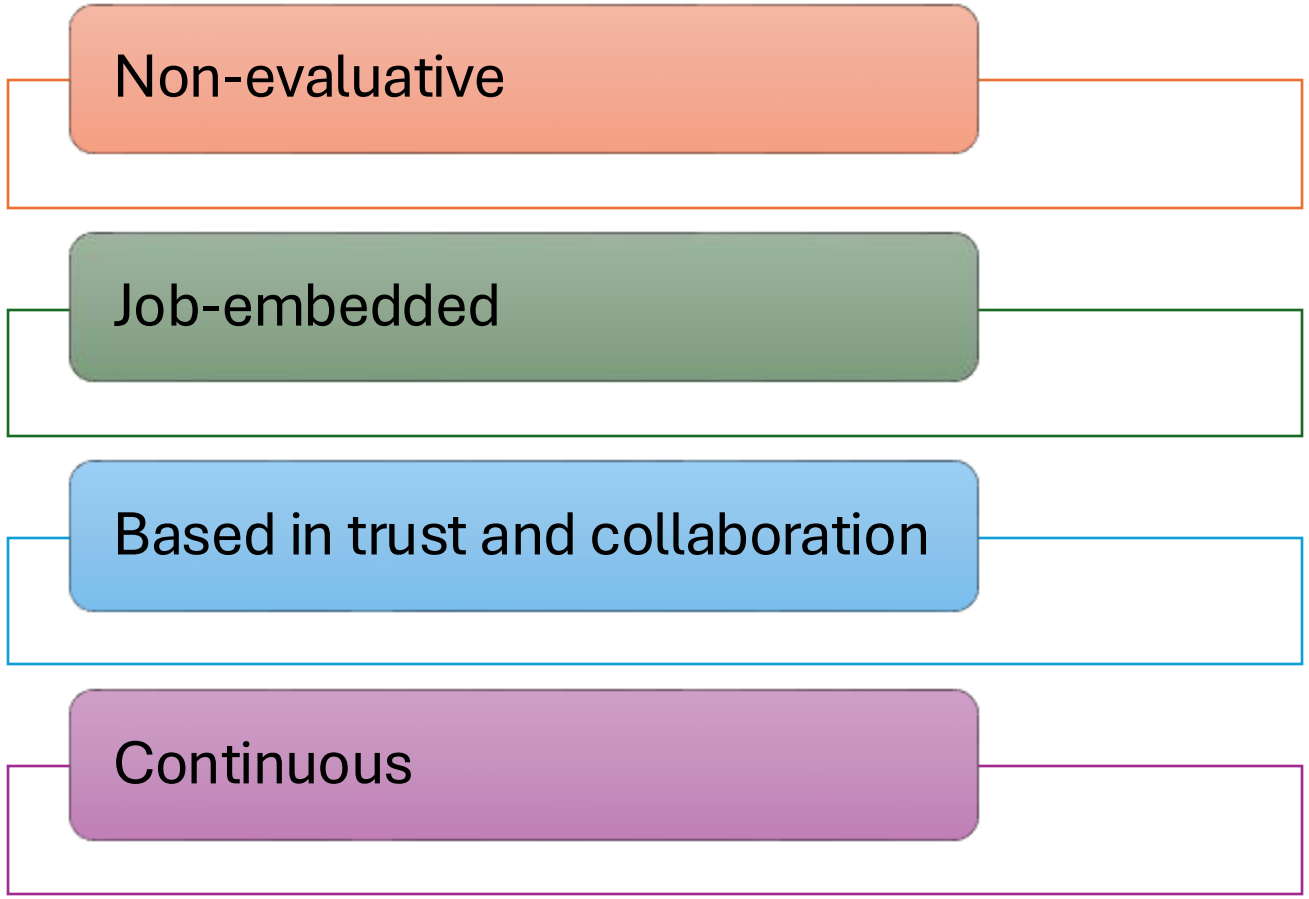
Maximizes the impact of teacher training, with 80-90% of teachers adopting and sustaining new instructional practices, compared with fewer than 20% of teachers who engage in training without coaching (Joyce & Showers, 2002).

Advances systemwide improvement, promoting coherent implementation of evidence-aligned practices and supporting continuous improvement across classrooms (Mangin & Dunsmore, 2015; Woulfin & Rigby, 2017).

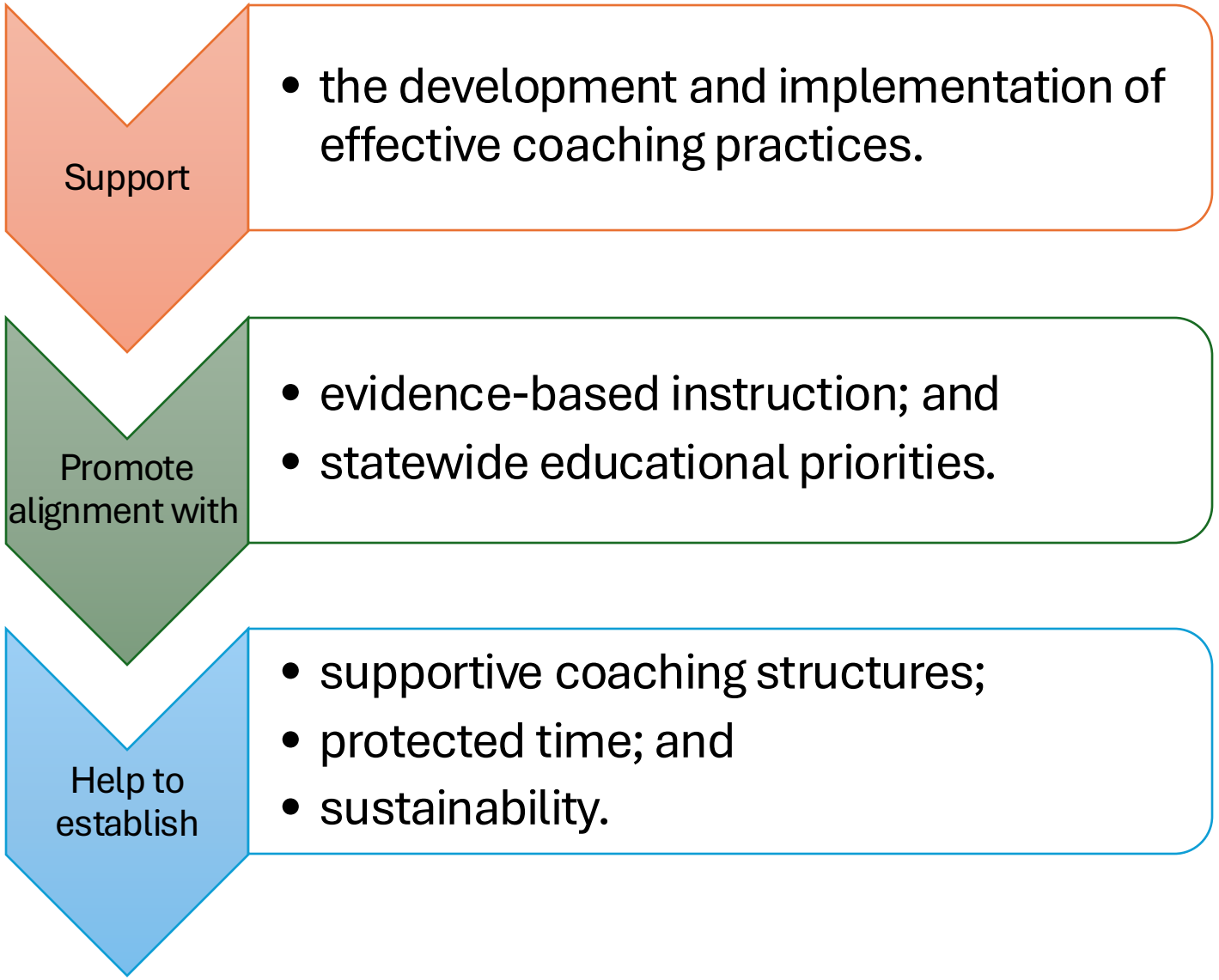
Students benefit when teachers are supported.

The CT Instructional Coaching Framework

Coaching is…



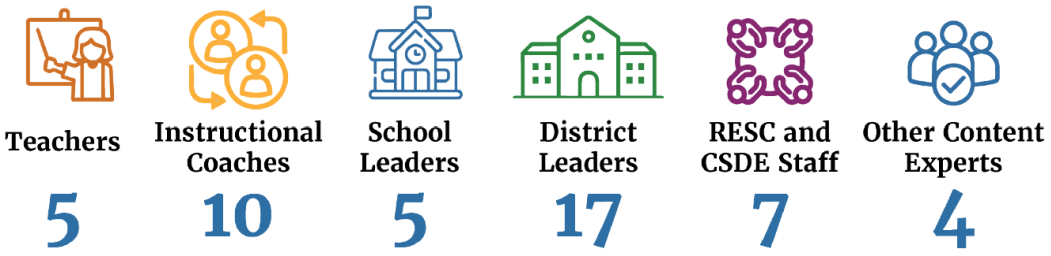
The CT Instructional Coaching Framework: Guidance and Resources



Development Timeline

June – Sept 2025	Sept – Nov 2025	Dec 2025	Jan – Feb 2026	March – Sept 2026	Winter 2026
• Initial Planning: CSDE and AIR Teams • Research inquiry process established	• Development of roundtable structures, protocols, and processes • Continued research process	• CSDE expands team to include Talent members • Continued research process	• Facilitation of roundtables • Debrief and analysis of roundtables • Complete research process	• Development of Framework components	• Dissemination of Framework

Instructional Coaching Roundtable Takeaways



January - February 2026:
Northeast Comprehensive Center (NECC) conducted 13 roundtable focus groups

Key takeaways and recommendations for state and local leaders:

- Create consistency throughout Connecticut while still finding ways to individualize coaching
- Disseminate guidance and resources to build coach capacity
- Align coaching across initiatives to create greater instructional coherence
- Consider how to:
  - Fund and sustain coaching positions
  - Protect coaches' time working with teachers
  - Cultivate professional learning cultures that promote coaching to support growth

What Key Components Are Provided Within the Framework?

General Resources	Slide
Overview	13-14
Research Findings	12
Roundtable Summary	16
Vision Statement	18

DRAFT Guidance Documents	Slide
What Is Instructional Coaching?	19
What Does the Research Say About Investing in Instructional Coaching?	20
What Does Effective Instructional Coaching Look Like?	21
Instructional Coaching Misconceptions and Facts	22
Instructional Coaching: What to Expect and How to Engage	23
Implementing Instructional Coaching	24

Instructional Coaching Vision

Every Connecticut student has access to **high-quality, evidence-aligned instruction**…

- delivered by educators who are **supported;**
- through **collaborative, nonevaluative, job-embedded coaching;**
- that operates within an **ongoing professional learning system;**
- that **prepares all students for life, learning, and work beyond school.**

DRAFT: What Is Instructional Coaching?

TYPES OF PROFESSIONAL LEARNING


Instructional coaching


Training/workshops


Educator preparation programs


Professional learning communities


Communities of practice


Mentoring

A Collaboration to Improve Instruction

INSTRUCTIONAL COACHING IS

Instructional coaching is a shared process for enhancing classroom practice between a teacher and an instructional coach with expertise in content, approaches to teaching, and adult learning. This collaborative partnership is critical to effective instructional coaching.[2,8] Effective coaching collaborations are grounded in trust and are supportive of teachers' continuous professional growth in service of student learning.[3,9]

INSTRUCTIONAL COACHING IS NOT

Instructional coaching is not performance evaluation. Instructional coaches are not evaluators, and not everyone receives coaching as part of the evaluation and support process. If instructional coaching is used to support performance improvement following an evaluation, administrators, coaches, and teachers can clarify what information from instructional coaching sessions will and will not be shared, creating transparency and protecting teacher trust.[3,9]

DRAFT: What Does the Research Say About Investing in Instructional Coaching?

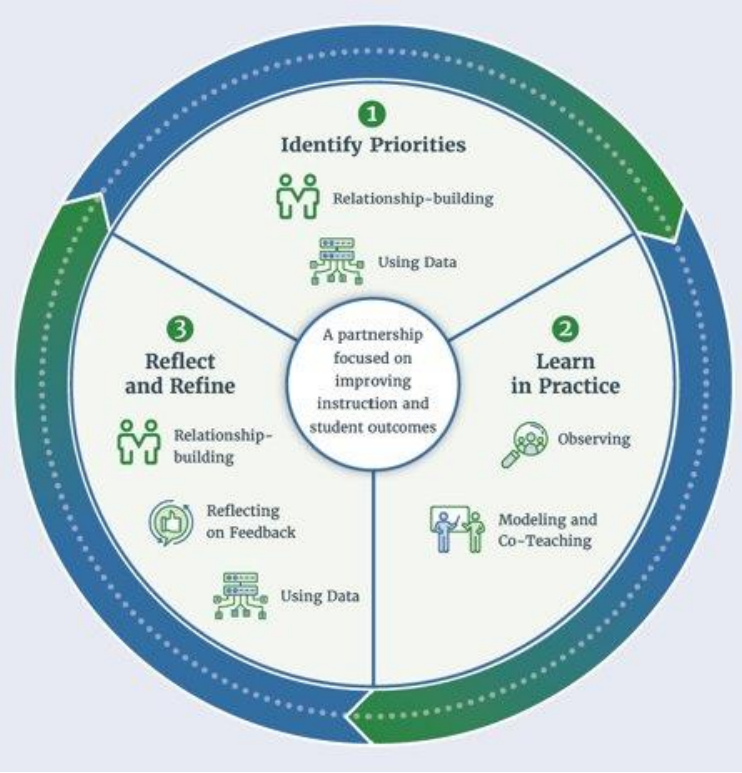


Improving Teacher Practice and Student Outcomes

When supported, protected, and aligned to instructional priorities, instructional coaching can be a high-return, evidence-based investment that drives measurable improvement in teacher capacity and student outcomes.[1,4,5] By providing job-embedded support, instructional coaching helps teachers implement evidence-aligned instructional strategies, refine their practice, and accelerate professional growth.[2,4,6,7] It also reinforces shared instructional priorities, fostering greater instructional coherence across classrooms, schools, and districts.[8,9,10]

DRAFT: What Does Effective Instructional Coaching Look Like?

Instructional Coaching Cycle



Characteristics of Effective Instructional Coaches

- Credibility, professionalism, and adult learning expertise
- Strong relational skills and the ability to build safety to take risks
- Nonevaluative, growth-oriented stance

DRAFT: Instructional Coaching Misconceptions and Facts

MISCONCEPTIONS

Little is known about what makes instructional coaching most effective.

FACTS

- Research shows that instructional coaching is most effective when coaches execute their role using proven practices. These include observing, modeling as needed, providing tailored feedback, and building positive relationships with teachers.[3,4]
- Effective instructional coaches put these practices into action through a structured, recursive cycle to improve teaching and student outcomes.[5,6,7]

DRAFT: Instructional Coaching: What to Expect and How to Engage



Coaching is student-focused and goal-driven. A teacher and an instructional coach will identify an instructional and student goal, focus on evidence-aligned practices and protocols to improve student outcomes, and use data to guide decisions and monitor progress.[2,9,10]



Coaching is embedded in a teacher's daily work. Teachers can expect protected time for coaching cycles, clear roles for both teacher and instructional coach, and a shared focus on using data to improve teaching and learning.[1,3,5,6]

DRAFT: Implementing Instructional Coaching

Recommendation	Rationale	Evidence-Aligned Actions
 **Align the focus of instructional coaching with student needs identified through rigorous data, curricula, and standards.**	Coaching is most effective when it is connected to the instructional work teachers are expected to do every day. Aligning instructional coaching to student needs identified through rigorous data, curricula, and instructional priorities increases relevance to teachers' practice, supports buy-in, and promotes greater consistency across classrooms and grade levels. Shared instructional priorities also help create a common vision for instruction and support more sustained systemwide improvement.	**DISTRICT** Build coach capacity on the standards, curricula, and instructional priorities teachers are expected to use.[9] **DISTRICT & SCHOOL** Establish clear expectations for instructional coaching, including key areas of instructional support and alignment to the adopted curricula, student learning expectations, and district and schoolwide instructional priorities that are aligned to student data.[9,10,14]

DRAFT: Strengthening Systems of Professional Learning



Strengthen systems-level infrastructure to sustain and scale instructional coaching.

- What are some themes that you heard?
- What next step(s) can you take to strengthen instructional coaching in your district?
- What is still needed to strengthen instructional coaching in your district?
- How can you align these different initiatives to cultivate a broader system of professional learning?