Instructional Coaching:
Effective Observations and Feedback

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Session Agenda and Objectives

1 Discuss the value and importance of instructional coaching, an Essential School System.

2 Review the components of a comprehensive instructional coaching system.

3 Give district teams time to develop and refine school coaching models.
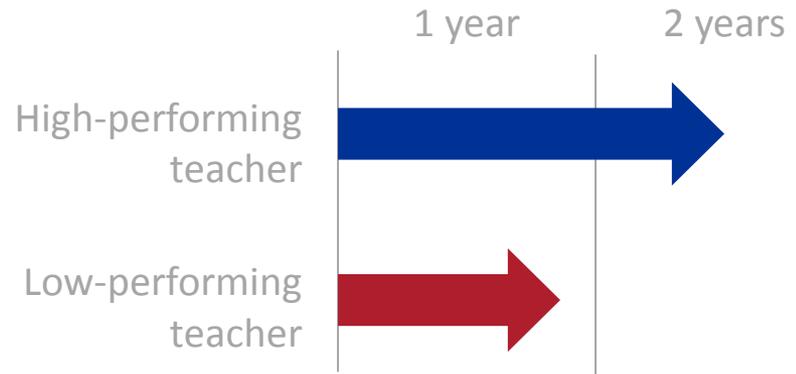
Coaching Benefits Students:

The quality of instruction is the single largest factor impacting student achievement.

Impact of Teachers on Student Achievement

The top 20% of teachers….

1 year   2 years
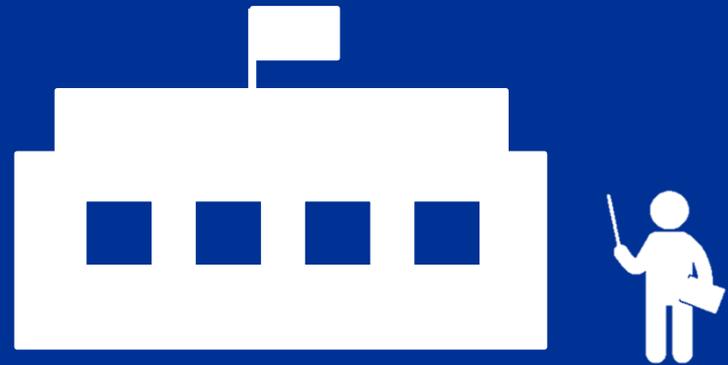
High-performing teacher

Low-performing teacher
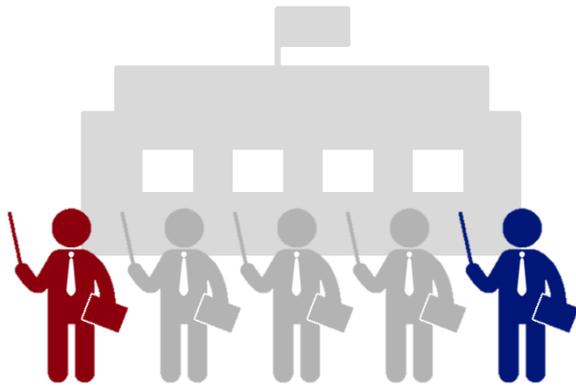
…Generate 5 to 6 more months of student learning each year compared to their peers.

Source: The New Teacher Project, *The Irreplaceables* (2012).

Coaching Benefits Teachers:

Strong teachers want to stay in environments where they feel supported and developed as professionals.
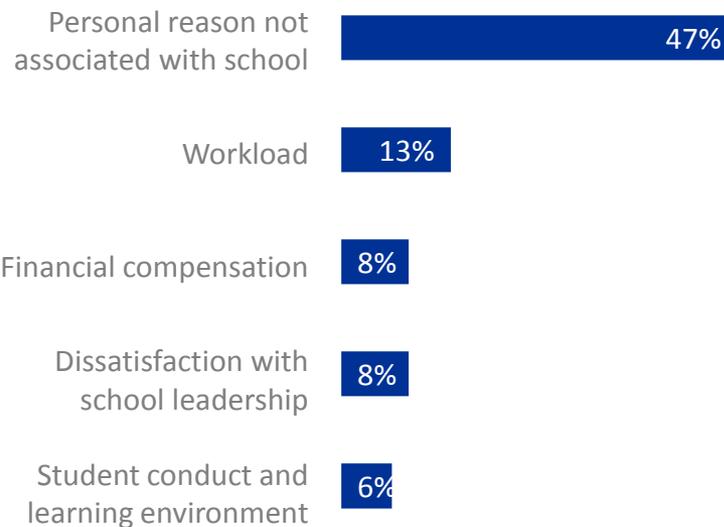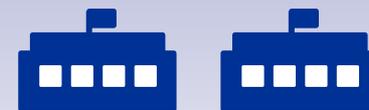
Instructional Culture Matters: Reasons Top Teachers Leave

Bottom-Quartile Schools
Weak Instructional Culture where schools lose twice as many of their effective teachers.

Top-Quartile Schools
Strong instructional culture where students learn more at a faster pace.

Bottom-Quartile Schools		Top-Quartile Schools	
Personal reason not associated with school	18%	Personal reason not associated with school	47%
Dissatisfaction with school leadership	18%	Workload	13%
Insufficient development opportunities	14%	Financial compensation	8%
Financial compensation	12%	Dissatisfaction with school leadership	8%
Student conduct and learning environment	10%	Student conduct and learning environment	6%

Source: The New Teacher Project, *Greenhouse Schools* (2012).

Our Investment:

A large portion of Alliance and Priority School District funds supports instructional coaches.

We are counting on district leadership to ensure instructional leaders in schools are fostering strong learning environments for students and staff.

The Bottom Line:

We need high-quality teachers in every classroom to reach our student achievement goals, and we must proactively develop and retain excellent teachers.

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1 Discuss the value and importance of instructional coaching, an Essential School System.

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Our Touchstone Text: *Leverage Leadership*
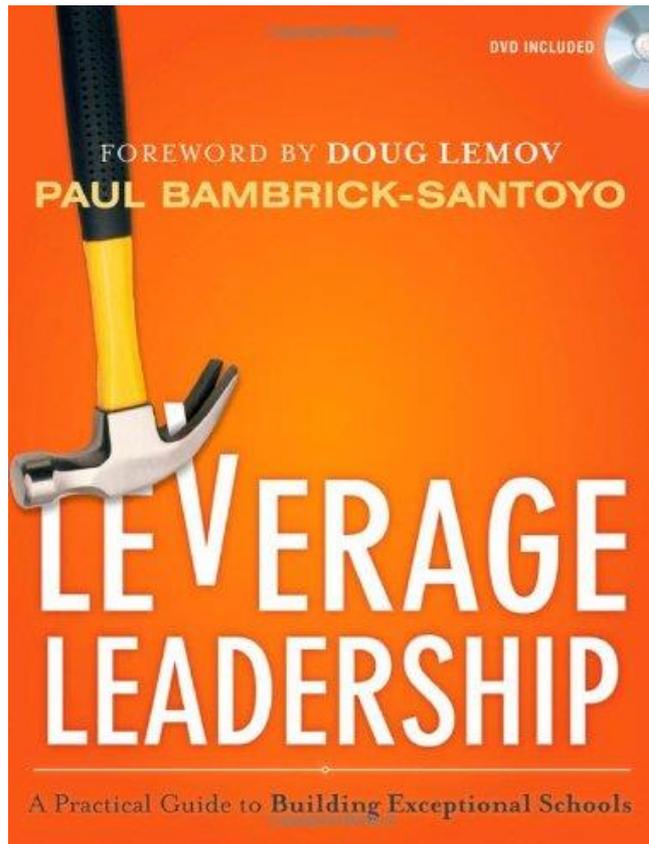
Today, we will review concepts, tools, and ideas presented in *Leverage Leadership*. Alliance Districts are not required to adopt these processes; rather, the concepts and frameworks provided are meant to offer ideas and stimulate planning conversations.

Debunking the Myths

Myths in Creating Strong Professional Learning Environments:

Myth #1 — Principals are administrators and firefighters, not instructional leaders.

Myth #2 — Observations, walkthroughs, and teacher evaluations are sufficient.

Myth #3 — Change is slow, and teacher development takes years.

Myth #4 — Culture comes before instruction… or instruction before culture.
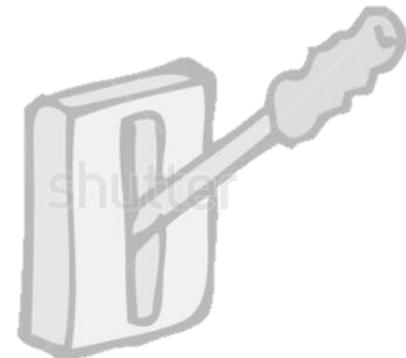
Source: *Leverage Leadership*, P. 7.

Santoyo's 7 Levers for Quality Instruction and Culture

Instructional Levers

1 Data-Driven Instruction

2 Observation and Feedback

3 Instructional Planning
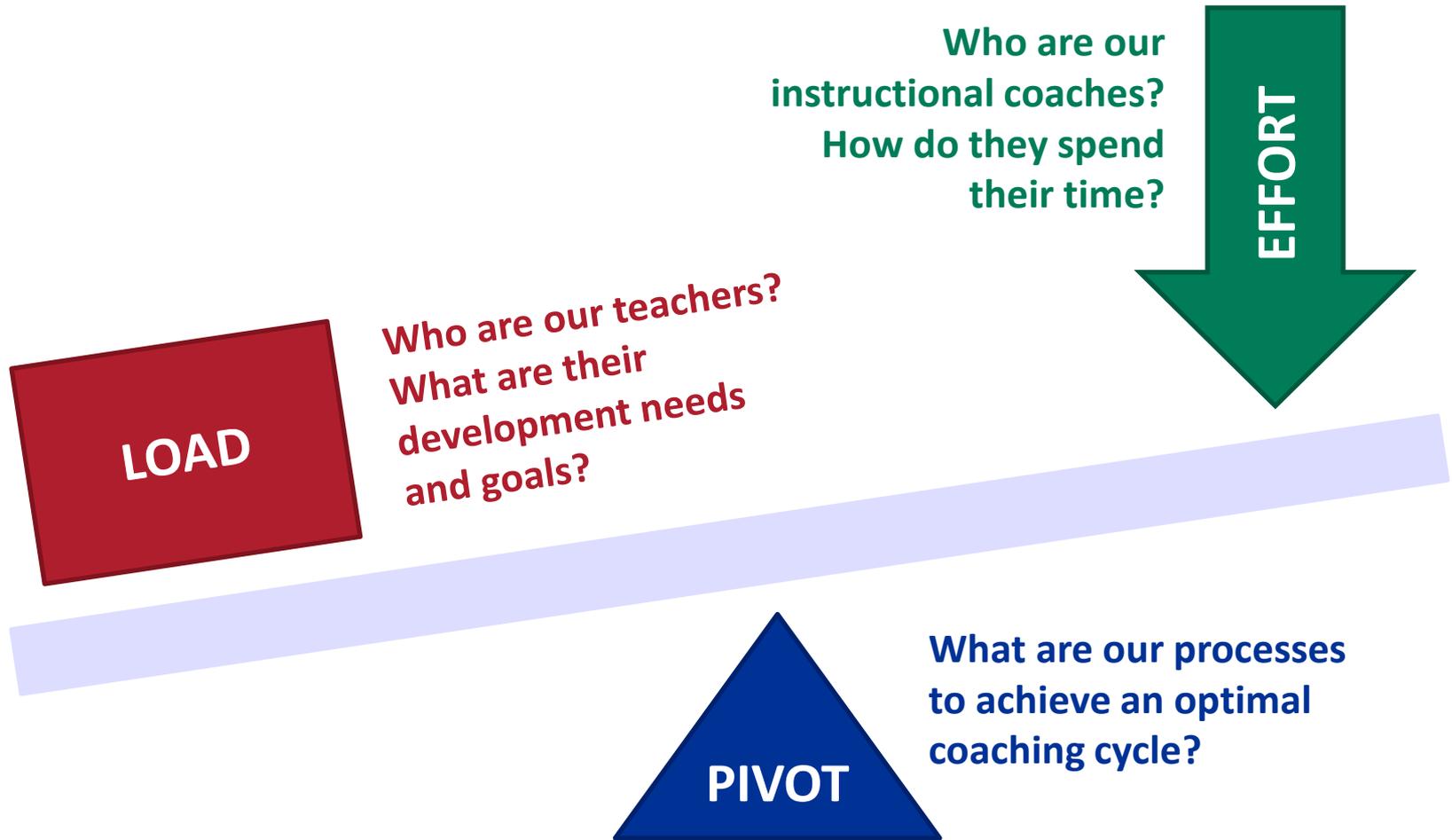
4 Professional Development

Cultural Levers

5 Student Culture

6 Staff Culture

7 Management of School Leadership Teams

Source: *Leverage Leadership*, P. 10.

Observations and Feedback as Instructional Levers

Who are our instructional coaches? How do they spend their time?

EFFORT

Who are our teachers? What are their development needs and goals?

LOAD

PIVOT

What are our processes to achieve an optimal coaching cycle?

Reflection

Directions:

On a piece of scrap paper, jot down two numbers:

What percentage of teachers in your district are observed every week? What percentage of your teachers receive feedback on a weekly basis?

Big Ideas for Today

We need to spend more time coaching and developing excellent teachers.

We must employ effective coaching tactics to maximize our impact.

Components of Observation and Feedback

Step 1 — **Scheduled Observations:** Lock in frequent and regular observations.

Step 2 — **Key Action Steps:** Identify one or two the teacher's most important growth areas.

Step 3 — **Effective Feedback:** Give direct face-to-face feedback and practice the specific action step with the teacher.

Step 4 — **Direct Accountability:** Create systems to ensure feedback translates to changes in practice.

Source: *Leverage Leadership*, P. 65.

Scheduled Observations: The Time Challenge

Strategy #1: Distribute the teacher coaching caseload across all instructional leaders.

- Who are the instructional coaches in your schools (e.g., principals, AP's, math/reading coaches, teacher leaders, department chairs)? What proportion of their time is dedicated to observation and feedback?

- How can you divide the teachers in your schools among your instructional leaders, ensuring that all teachers have an informal coach?

Principal	AP	Math Coach	Reading Coach	Teacher Leader

Scheduled Observations: The Time Challenge

Strategy #2: Employ an efficient coaching cycle. Structure a consistent coaching experience for teachers, including frequent and short observations, face-to-face feedback meetings, and as needed follow-up.

- What does your coaching cycle look like?

- What is the length of the cycle?

- How is this differentiated for teachers based on development needs (e.g., coaching cycle repeated every week for high-touch teachers, every 3 weeks for low-touch teachers)?

Short Observation → Feedback Meeting → Follow-Up
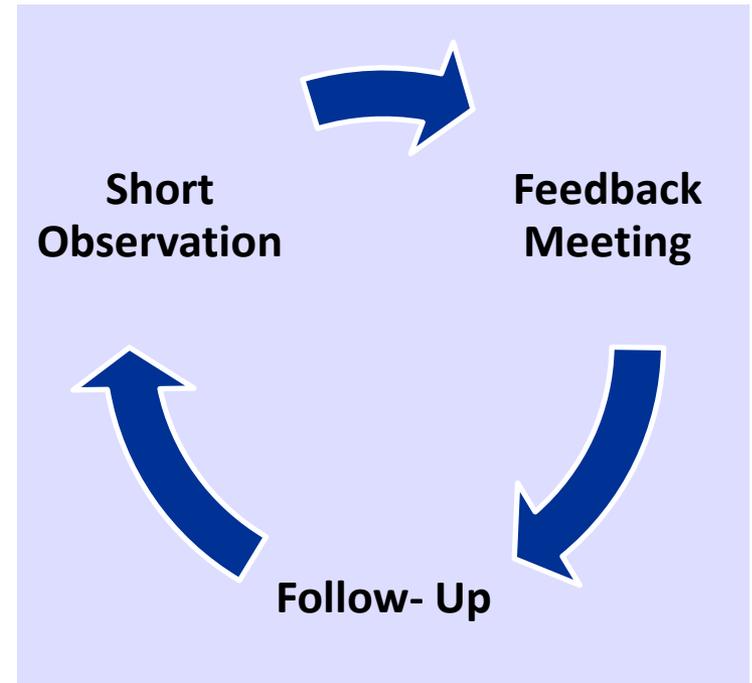
Scheduled Observations: Making It Happen

- Typical teacher caseload: 15 teachers

- One observation per week per teacher: 15 minutes

- Total minutes of observation per week: 15 teachers x 15 minutes = < 4 hours/week

- One feedback and planning meeting per teacher: 30 minutes

- Total minutes of feedback and planning meetings: 15 x 30 minutes = 7.5 hours/week

- Assuming a 7 AM – 4 PM administrator day = **25% of an administrator's schedule.**

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
6:00 AM					
6:30 AM					
7:00 AM					
7:30 AM					
8:00 AM	Jones, Torres	Meet Jones			Meet Robbins
8:30 AM	Ramirez, Smith	Meet Smith	Meet Brown	Meet Clark	Meet Carr
9:00 AM		Meet Ramirez	Meet Howe	Meet Robins	
9:30 AM	Parker, Hoyt	Meet Torres		Meet Sims	
10:00 AM			Robins, Sims, Clark	Sanchez, Carr	Meet Sanchez
10:30 AM				White, Robins	Meet White
11:00 AM					
11:30 AM		Brown, Howe			
12:00 PM		Meet Hoyt			
12:30 PM		Meet Parker			
1:00 PM					
1:30 PM					
2:00 PM					
2:30 PM					
3:00 PM					
3:30 PM					
4:00 PM					
4:30 PM					

Observations | Meetings | Work Time

Source: *Leverage Leadership*, P. 68.

Team Work Time: Coaches, Caseloads, and Scheduling

Directions:

Review the coaching ESS planning template (note: you are not required to use this format). Take **20 minutes** with your district team to plan in any of the following areas:

I. Identify your **instructional coaches**.
II. Establish a **faculty coaching plan**.
III. Define the **coaching cycle** that all coaches will use.
IV. Develop your/your coaches' weekly coaching **schedules**.

Components of Observation and Feedback

Step 1

Scheduled Observations: Lock in frequent and regular observations.

Step 2

Key Action Steps: Identify one or two the teacher's most important growth areas.

Step 3

Effective Feedback: Give direct face-to-face feedback and practice the specific action step with the teacher.

Step 4

Direct Accountability: Create systems to ensure feedback translates to changes in practice.

- **Measurable:** Coach can see whether it has been accomplished when observing and reviewing lesson plans.

- **Bite-sized:** Teacher can accomplish the action step within the next week.

- **Precise:** Action step addresses the root causes, not just the surface problem.

- **Data- and Goal-Driven:** Action step is connected to larger PD goals and/or teacher development goals.

- **Outcomes-Oriented:** Action step is directly connected to student learning.

Sample Action Steps

- Clearly state instructions and have students repeat.

- Develop procedures; write and rehearse minute-by-minute.

- Narrate the positive. Describe what students are doing well, not what they're doing wrong.

- Increase teacher radar (awareness of off-task behavior) and implement least-invasive interventions when students first exhibit off-task behaviors.

- Use a strong voice. Establish authority.

- Develop pacing. Create the illusion of speed so students feel continually engaged.

- Check for understanding. See whether students have learned the material frequently using various techniques.

- Increase think ratio. Get students to do more of the thinking.

- Encourage effective independent practice. Ensure that student independent practice meets the lesson objective.

- Establish the right lesson objective. Write precise learning objectives.

Source: *Leverage Leadership*, P. 73.

Weak vs. Strong Action Steps

Scenario 1: Students are talking while the teacher is talking.

Scenario 2: Students never get enough time to practice the skill independently.

✗ *Weak Action Step:* Reduce student talking when you are talking.

✗ *Weak Action Step:* Watch your pacing so as not to sacrifice independent practice.

✓ *Better Action Step:* Don't talk over students. Stop and make eye contact with the student talking. Throughout the lesson, walk with purpose toward students who may have a hard time staying on task.

✓ *Better Action Step:* Set a timer to go off when there are 20 minutes left in the lesson to remind you to begin independent practice.

Source: *Leverage Leadership*, P. 77.

Feedback Conversation Protocol

1. **Provide Praise:** Start off the meeting with one or two pieces of precise praise from your observation.

2. **Probe:** Ask a targeted, open-ended question about the growth area observed.

3. **Identify Concrete Action Step:** Identify the problem and state a clear, measurable, observable action step that will address the issue.

4. **Plan and Practice:** Role-play or simulate how the teacher could have improved the lesson. Design or revise an upcoming lesson to implement this practice.

5. **Set Timeline:** Determine a time by which the action will be accomplished/observed.

Consider aligning praise and action steps to the walkthrough rubric.

Source: *Leverage Leadership*, P. 78.

Common Missteps in Delivering Feedback

Misstep:		Truth:
More is better.	→	Less is more!
Lengthy written evaluations drive change.	→	Face-to-face feedback makes the difference.
Just tell them; they'll get it right.	→	If they don't do the thinking, they won't internalize what they hear.
State the concrete action step; then the teacher will act.	→	Guided practice makes perfect. A surgeon doesn't read the textbook and then perform the surgery.
Teachers can implement feedback at any time.	→	Nail down the timeline.
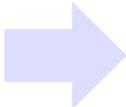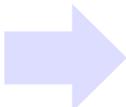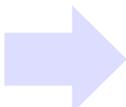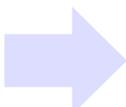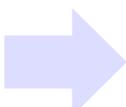
Source: *Leverage Leadership*, P. 79.

Sample Classroom Observation

Directions:

Watch the video clip.

What precise point of praise might you offer to this teacher?

What action step might you identify for this teacher?

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Sample Feedback

Provide Praise:

- **Classroom Rubric #4: Positive Behavior Management** - Good movement around the classroom.

- **Classroom Rubric #3: Classroom Learning Environment** - Engaging and clean classroom environment.

Probe:

- What was your lesson objective (e.g., root words, new vocabulary)?

- What proportion of the lesson was spent with you talking, students thinking, and/or students talking/conversing?

- Did students end the lesson with a clear definition for the word "specially" (e.g., for a special purpose)? How do you know?

Identify Concrete Action Step:

- **Classroom Rubric #1: Student Engagement -** Establish a clear lesson objective.

- **Classroom Rubric #6: Academic Rigor and Ownership -** Give student more "think time" and decrease teacher talk.

Directions:

Watch the video clip.

What precise point of praise might you offer to this teacher?

What action step might you identify for this teacher?

Provide Praise:

- **Classroom Rubric #1: Student Engagement -** Clever lesson idea, asking students to recall definitions and integrate vocabulary in teams.

Probe:

- What instructions did you share with your students?

- How did you know students understood the directions?

- When students began the activity, did they follow the instructions you provided? How do you know?

Identify Concrete Action Step:

- **Classroom Rubric # 2: Use of Time -** Improve efficiency during transitions by clearly explaining instructions and asking students to restate the directions.

Accountability: Monitor Teacher Development

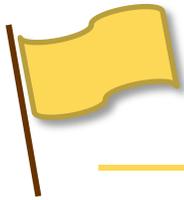| Teacher:	Mr. Smith			
Coach:	Mrs. Sanchez			
Observation Date:	Feedback Meeting:	Praise:	Action Step:	Evidence of Progress:
9/5	9/6	Great movement around the classroom throughout the lesson.	Give students an exit ticket to wrap up the lesson and check for understanding.	Do nows effectively administered.
9/12	9/13	Solid graphic organizer to assist student in note-taking.	When you or a student is talking, reinforce that other students' listening by signaling for other students to put their hands down..	Stronger pacing and transitions.

Observation trackers allow you to observe:

- Patterns over time
- Patterns across teachers
- Patterns of visits (observing too much/not enough)
- Pattern in feedback effectiveness (implementation and success rates)

Source: *Leverage Leadership*, P. 94.

Accountability: Monitor Teacher Development

For support in creating and using Google trackers, please contact Dipa at Dipa.Desai@ct.gov

Accountability: Tiered Support and Coaching

**Early Warnings
Yellow Flag Strategies**

- Provide simpler instructions and techniques

- Give face-to-face feedback more often

- Plan immediate post-feedback observations

- Arrange for peer observations

- Choose interruptions during the classroom lesson with care

**Continued Struggles
Red Flag Strategies**

- Model entire lessons

- Take over the lesson

Source: *Leverage Leadership*, P. 90.

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Team Work Time: Action Steps and Monitoring

Revisit the coaching ESS planning template. Take **20 minutes** with your district team to plan in the following areas:

V. Identify a bank of potential teacher **action steps** based on known teacher/school-wide growth areas.
VI. Build a protocol for coach/teacher **feedback meetings**.
VII. Develop a **monitoring tool for coaches** to log observations, feedback meetings, and teacher action steps and progress.