

Providing ongoing professional development when dedicated time is not scheduled can certainly be challenging. As a result, instructional coaches need to think creatively about providing ongoing professional learning opportunities to teachers and other staff members in sustainable ways. Catching those few minutes in the hallway or in the parking lot is not enough time to brainstorm what is needed, plan the delivery, and reflect on what effective professional development looks like.

Instructional coaches need to design a plan of action for delivering one-on-one and small group professional development that increases teacher effectiveness and improves student learning. That means that following the BDA cycle of coaching may not look the same for every teacher the coach supports. For instance, a coach may facilitate a meeting with a small group of grade level teachers or same content area teachers to plan a unit of study around a specific discipline. Once the unit is planned, the coach needs to meet one-on-one to discuss the specific goals for the lesson and then again to debrief what worked well during that lesson. The “D” part of the cycle may vary in length of time the coach spends during the lesson with each teacher. In some cases, the coach may not be able to visit the class to see the lesson in action. The step that is critical for change is the debriefing or “A” part of the cycle where the coach and teacher discuss what worked well during that class time and what needs to be strengthened. This stage of the cycle is most effective as a one-on-one consultation within a few days of the actual class period.

Some coaches may need to develop a cohort cycle of support. The coach needs to collaborate with teachers and creatively organize into cohorts. The cohorts may be interdisciplinary or designed around content areas, grade levels, years of experience, available class periods, etc. The coach works with each cohort of teachers for a defined amount of time, implementing the BDA cycle of consultation, confidentiality, collaboration, and collective problem solving. Once the cohort cycle is complete, the coach begins the cycle again with the next cohort of teachers. If possible, one cohort group can become “buddies” to another cohort group reinforcing the notion that everyone is a member in a community of learning. As Learning Forward states, “By making learning the focus, those who are responsible for professional learning will concentrate their efforts on assuring that learning for educators leads to learning for students.” (*Standards for Professional Learning*, p. 13.)

Providing ongoing professional development regularly in small groups may also occur through the establishment of PLCs where staff members are organized by choice. Once a needs assessment reveals the appropriate topics/concepts around which the PLCs can be formed, the coach and/or teacher leader engages the members in a “communal” type conversation where data, design, and delivery of instruction are routinely discussed. These PLCs may meet once a

month or every six weeks at various times before, during, or after the day. Between face-to-face sessions, developing a moodle or wiki to create common space to post ideas, actions taken or to collectively problem solve help blend two productive ways of continuing the learning process with the shared vision of increasing teacher effectiveness.

Regardless of our current coaching practice as a part time or full time position, coaches, teachers, administrators and other school leaders have a responsibility to promote ongoing learning through effective teacher professional development. Although the question may be how to deliver that professional learning to our stakeholders, the understanding that it must be accomplished is not in question.