

With the emphasis on educator effectiveness and the Common Core State Standards, many districts are trying to be proactive and set the tone for the impending evaluations of both teachers and principals. While the "frenzy" is understandable, the collaboration and collective problem solving around educator effectiveness is what will make the difference in an effective evaluation process. The focus should not be on the evaluation itself; the focus should be on providing sustainable effective professional learning and creating a collaborative culture that will help support educators and transform classroom instruction and assessment.

A recent Ed Week commentary (November 13, 2012) by Costa, Garmston, and Zimmerman states that there is *"...too much emphasis on inspecting and testing" in order to determine educator effectiveness. In fact, the authors suggest that some of the tests used are invalid. They claim that the "...investment in external measures hides our most valuable assets - the cognitive resources of teachers. Too often, standards are the basis for inspection, with minimal dialogue and little attention to teachers' intellect, wisdom, intuition, and creativity."*

Instructional coaches provide multiple opportunities to sustain professional learning and to help institutionalize effective practices that support both student and educator growth. They are the side-by-side support system in real time. Where else can you talk to a colleague and share ideas before implementation? Think of the process as making one's thoughts visible and talking through the steps in a non-evaluative setting with an experienced colleague who can ask questions that might not have been asked by oneself. Imagine receiving feedback that is timely, relevant, specific, and responsive to the needs of the teacher. Imagine the benefit of having the one-on-one support to consult, collaborate, and reflect with someone who recognizes the value of "cognitive capital." That is, *"... what goes on in a teacher's head that allows for complex decisions in the classroom."* Coaches value and honor teacher, administrator, and student expertise. They are great listeners who support learning at all levels.

Costa et al talk about how teachers are metacognitive. They think about their thinking and reflect on their actions - before, during, and after instruction. This, they say, is an important measure of quality instruction. When teachers are successful in their classroom practices and share those practices in reflective and collaborative ways, the effect is cumulative. That is, they help "spread the wealth" of best practices and ensure that they are changing the culture of the school, one conversation at a time, one generation at a time.

Instructional coaches are the most effective vehicle to share effective instructional practices.

They are part of a systems approach where professional learning is provided on multiple levels and they support teachers and administrators with a plethora of resources. They encourage literacy across all content areas and reinforce ways to collect, analyze and use data to assess student needs. They believe in what Charlotte Danielson advocates, "... *multiple opportunities to practice using [her] framework effectively and to calibrate their judgments with others.*"

Sounds like a perfect place for coaches in the educator effectiveness process to support teacher and student growth.