

Ah, Thanksgiving... so much for which to be thankful, especially looking forward to a few days off for the Thanksgiving holiday! We all need time to rest up after the marathon eating of Turkey and all the trimmings!

In many of my conversations with coaches, one thing is taking the lead about instructional coaching. How do coaches work with teachers to implement effective instructional practices in non-evaluative ways? How do coaches work with teachers to share a variety of instructional techniques if they can't get to classrooms to see how the teachers practice?

For anyone who has been around for some time in education, you know that textbook companies have offered a plethora of instructional techniques with quick descriptions about how to use them either in print or on online. We have a great statewide SAS portal, [www.pdesas.org](http://www.pdesas.org), with free teacher tools that are available to all members. We also have a wonderful online PIIC instructional coaching resource guide, [www.instituteforinstructionalcoaching.org](http://www.instituteforinstructionalcoaching.org), that offers a multitude of resources for coaches to help teachers think about using these tools. Having said that, finding the resources and materials is not the issue; using the resources and reflecting upon that use is where instructional delivery changes.

Instructional coaches must meet one-on-one and in small groups with teachers. Time must be intentionally scheduled to meet with teachers to discuss effective instructional strategies and how to effectively use these strategies. This does not happen in a brief, "by the way" kind of conversation in the hallway or parking lot. In fact, having the conversation there trivializes the importance of a dedicated discussion about practice. This happens when coaches and teachers collaborate regularly and consistently to discuss instructional strategies. 81% of high one-on-one coached teachers report that their knowledge of research-based literacy strategies increased and deepened as a result of working with their coach ( [2009 Summary of selected results, PAHSCI Teacher Survey](#)

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[www.pacoaching.org](http://www.pacoaching.org)  
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A list is just that... a list. How the list is used and the conversation around using that list is where change takes place. It doesn't come from the list itself. It comes from the ongoing discussions about the items on the list and the effective implementation of what that list

contains.

Through the **B, D, A** process, coaches need to identify the teachers they are supporting and create scheduled time to talk about literacy practices, lesson design, digital learning, PA core, and a host of other topics that influence student learning. Once planning and preparation takes place ( *before*), the coach and teacher decide when to schedule a classroom visit and when the debriefing will take place, keeping in mind that specific “look fors” were co-constructed in the planning session. Once the visit occurs ( *during* ), the teacher and coach reflect **on** action, **in** action and **about** action ( *after* ) and share their thoughts about the strengths of the lesson and what kind of changes are needed.

Depending on the number of teachers, coaches may need to create cohort groups, maybe working with grade level teachers, content area teachers, and perhaps interdisciplinary teams of teachers or similar combinations. Most combinations work if the coaches provide 1-on-1 support to the teachers, focus on literacy, and work with each teacher in the cohort. Once a defined period of time elapses (perhaps 6-8 week cycle), the coach moves onto another cohort group. Cohort group one can become the “buddy” group to cohort group 2 and so on, fostering collective problem-solving and critical friends’ group support. Eventually, all the teachers in the cohort groups receive 1-on-1 reinforcement by the coach, focus on literacy across content and grade levels, and benefit from ongoing support. Each teacher collaborates with the coach and with each other. This collaborative pattern offers an effective ongoing teacher professional development model that can be implemented in chunks of time with cycles of support that help build those reciprocal relationships in buildings.

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