

By [RMC Jacky Territo and IU PIIC Mentors Jen Herncane and Breanne Scears](#)

Leadership is a daunting task, even for someone with legitimate authority or power. “Following one step ahead” of one’s peers can be even more challenging for a coach or mentor. But in the scheme of things, who is better to lead when they have already walked a mile in one’s shoes?

Mentors and coaches are in prime position to lead their peers to the next level of their understanding, skill, or to refining their practice. In the book, *Indelible Leadership*, author Michael Fullan writes, “Deep leadership is not about finding things that were always there, but creating things that were never imagined.” Understanding leadership and the tasks of leadership can help to teachers, coaches, and school leaders avoid the stress that is often associated with “leading”. Mentors can use the leadership skills of directing, coaching, supporting and delegating to facilitate a coach’s growth as the coach, in turn, uses these skills to work with peers.

PIIC advocates one-on-one and small group support for teachers, coaches, and school leaders. This requires that the mentor or coach must, at times, work with those who have more authority but less knowledge or experience regarding a particular topic. Fullan says, “You do not have to be the most knowledgeable content person in the room, (in fact, you won’t be) but you do have to help ensure that the group’s ideas are assessed and processed.” Approaching the task requires awareness of the willingness and level of understanding of the audience, without judging or avoiding the task. Often, when the mentor or coach approaches someone who is resistant to the message they are communicating, it can be discouraging and cause avoidance. In either case, the choice of leadership behavior can determine the success of the mentor or coach’s efforts.

Those situations that call for a directive approach will require a presentation of information, specific direction to follow for implementation, and specific feedback on performance. Supportive leadership behaviors enable the coach or mentor to “guide on the side” while still providing input and participating in the activity being practiced. Coaching behaviors embody the BDA in its entirety giving the coach or mentor the ability to truly lead by following the direction of the practitioner while introducing ideas and providing data to be analyze cooperatively. When the coaching has accomplished its’ intended goal, the act of delegating will enable the coach, mentor and mentees to move on to the next level of performance or to a new strategy or skill that enhances student learning.

The reflective practices that emerge from the leadership process offer opportunities for professional growth, ongoing improvement, and valuable relationships among and between teachers, coaches, and school leaders. Choosing the appropriate leadership behaviors can lead to success.