INSTRUCTIONAL COACHING: A RESEARCH BASED RESOURCE GUIDE

by

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A capstone project submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Literacy Education

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The Capstone Project

“Coaching done well may be the most effective intervention designed for human performance.” - Atul Gawande

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Introduction

The Purpose

The creation of this coaching guide began with my own desire to have an anchor for a newly acquired position as an instructional coach. The job of an instructional coach to bring evidence based practice into classrooms by working with teachers to refine their practice (Bryan, Clifton, Harrison, Killion 2012). Leaving the classroom after 17 years afforded me practical teaching experience and strong relationships with my colleagues but little in the way of coaching adults. In my experience, coaches have been high performing teachers with good interpersonal skills. I did not feel this was enough for me to base my work; I wanted a depth of understanding about coaching that could help move teachers and students forward. Although I began this project for myself, I discovered along the way that most instructional coaches have little to no training in how to coach which contradicts what research has found about the importance of a research based knowledge base for all literacy coaches (McKenna & Walpole, 2013). That discovery made me realize that this guide could be an anchor for other coaches. Thus, I began my research with a broader audience than first intended and a possible contribution to the field of coaching in the form of a research based coaching guide. The goal was twofold—increase coaching efficacy amongst new coaches and consequently increase student achievement. The completed guide is a collection of resources that reflect research based best coaching practice.
My research afforded me the opportunity to learn, digest, and synthesize an abundance of information about instructional coaching. I acquired a bank of knowledge based on the work of many prominent coaching experts and adult learning theorists to anchor my project. When I began my capstone research, I found myself continually asking how I would retain, use, and integrate all that I learned? In response, I created a product that would allow me to positively answer the question that has been the driving force behind my research: What impact would a research based coaching guide have on a coach’s effectiveness with teachers, understanding that the end goal of coaching is increased student achievement? The resource created is a synthesis of all that I have learned in the form of a research based coaching “tool kit” for coaching staff.

The Process

Because the audience for this guide is adults, I had to consider a format that would be easily accessed, digested, and provide an arena for learning. Knowles (1977), a pioneer in adult learning, suggested that adult learners benefit from knowing the purpose of the learning and how it directly applies to them. In reference to this guide, it meant planning for purpose driven task-oriented learning for coaches. Ideas that can guide the work of the coach the very next day provide a sense of accomplishment and clear purpose. The final product is a Google document, which makes it accessible from anywhere, viewed by multiple users at once, and can easily be a vehicle for collaboration. As the collective knowledge of the coaches grows, so can the guide with the
addition of new research based sources.

The constructivist developmental adult learning theory believes that much of what we know about student learning is true of adult learning (Breidenstein, Fahey, Glickman, & Hensley, 2012). Because of what I know about adult learners, I knew it was important during the construction part of my guide that I provide resources for all levels of coaches. Coaches who already have a depth and breadth of knowledge around coaching and ones who are new to the field can benefit from this resource. These common threads in adult learning: clear purpose for learning, constructive feedback, reflection, and differentiated resources to meet the needs of the coach are embedded in the planning and implementation of the guide.

**The Potential**

Inherent to any coaching resource is the end goal of improved performance of the team. The team, in this case, is a group of coaches whose performance directly affects teachers' work with students is the increased efficacy of the classroom teacher that results in increased student achievement. Researchers Baxter and Sandvold (2008) asserted that the primary purpose of a literacy coach is to help move building and teacher goals forward by connecting school improvement and classroom implementation. This guide provides research based best practice for coaching that, in the end, transfers to refined classroom practice. Similarly, author and literacy leader, Moran (2007), described the end goal of coaching as the interlacing of improved instruction to improve student learning. Likewise, Marzano and Simms (2013) suggested the purpose of
coaching is to guide teachers toward best practice, show teachers best practice, help teachers maintain best practice, challenge and support teachers learning, and to create a culture where taking risks to improve is the norm. Although the researchers use a variety of words to describe the purpose of coaching, common themes arose. The themes all pointed to increasing student achievement through the work of the teacher. It is my belief that the work with teachers will be more effective when we use, refine, and expand this research based resource to anchor our work.

**The Impact**

Coaches need to be in a constant state of reflection as they use this guide. Moran (2007) contended it is critical that literacy coaches measure the effectiveness of the coaching process. Guskey (2002) acknowledged there are many variables in directly measuring the impact of professional development but argues that “in the absence of proof, you can collect good evidence about whether a professional development program has contributed to specific gains in student learning” (p. 48). Coaches need to be sure to document all of what they see and hear as they measure effectiveness along the way. The impact of this guide will be seen in classroom observations, coaching conversations, and, of course, formative and summative student data. My plan is that I continually refine this resource in response to our reflections about our coaching, classroom practice, and student data. This guide will demonstrate a growth mindset and be in a continual state of revision as we are continually learning more about instructional coaching.
Planning for Coaching
Research, Recommendations, and Resources

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Looking to learn more about planning for coaching ... Click on some of my favorites below.

- The Art of Coaching by Elena Aguilar
- Coaching Matters by Bryon, Clifton, Harrison, Killion
- The Heart of Coaching by Thomas Crane
- Coaching Classroom Instruction by Robert Marzano
- The Literacy Coach’s Handbook By McKenna and Walpole
- The Literacy Coach’s Survival Guide by Cathy Toll
# Coaching Best Practice

## Research, Recommendations, and Resources

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<td>Coach Tool- Weekly Calendar</td>
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Looking to learn more about coaching best practice… click on some of my favorites below!

**Online Resources:**
- [http://www.literacycoachingonline.org/](http://www.literacycoachingonline.org/)

**Books and Articles:**
- *The Art of Coaching* by Elena Aguilar
- *The Fundamentals of Literacy Coaching* by Maelou Baxter and Amy Sandvold
- *What matters for elementary literacy coaching? Guiding principles for instructional improvement for student achievement* - *The Reading Teacher*
- *Effective Literacy Coaching* by Shari Frost, Robert Buhle, and Camille Blachowicz
- *Coaching Matters* by Bryon, Clifton, Harrison, Killion
- *Instructional Coaching* by Jim Knight
- *Coaching Classroom Instruction* by Robert Marzano
- *The Literacy Coach’s Handbook* by McKenna and Walpole
- *Differentiated Literacy Coaching* by Mary Catherine Moran
- *The Literacy Coach’s Survival Guide* by Cathy Toll
# Differentiated Coaching Opportunities

Research, Recommendations, and Resources

## Links to Research Based Resources

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Looking to learn more about coaching best practice… click on the some of my favorites below!

**Online Resources**

http://elenaaguilar.com/resources/coaching-tools/

http://www.literacycoachingonline.org/

**Books and Articles**

The Art of Coaching by Elena Aguilar

The Fundamentals of Literacy Coaching by Maelou Baxter and Amy Sandvold

Effective Literacy Coaching by Shari Frost, Robert Buhle, and Camille Blachowicz

The five disciplines of PLC leaders By Timothy Kanold

Creating a Coaching Culture in Professional Learning Communities by James Kise and Beth Russell

Coaching Classroom Instruction by Robert Marzano

The Literacy Coach’s Handbook By McKenna and Walpole

Differentiated Literacy Coaching by Mary Catherine Moran
# Measuring Effectiveness

Research, Recommendations, and Resources

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<td>Professional Development Checklist</td>
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Looking to learn more about measuring effectiveness... click on some of my favorites below!

**Online Resources**

- [http://www.literacycoachingonline.org/](http://www.literacycoachingonline.org/)
**Books and Articles**

- The Art of Coaching by Elena Aguilar
- Evaluating Professional Development by Robert Guskey
- Effective Literacy Coaching by Shari Frost, Robert Buhle, and Camille Blachowicz
- Coaching: Fostering Reflection With Teachers- The Reading Teacher
- A Study of the Effectiveness of Literacy Coaches by National Reading Center
- The Literacy Coach's Handbook By McKenna and Walpole
- Differentiated Literacy Coaching by Mary Catherine Moran
Conclusion

This journey has been one with many twists and turns and much self discovery along the way. It was truly a journey of a lifetime which included blood, sweat, and tears. As I reflect on all that I have learned from the research and creation of the coaching guide, I am pleasantly surprised at my new-found confidence in the coaching role. I find myself leaning on the research based recommendations and the reference materials in the project in my daily work. Upon completion, the resource was shared with my colleagues and will subsequently be offered to coaches who may join us in the future. My hope is that my coaching colleagues will not only use the resource but contribute to it and make it a core resource for themselves too. The coaching guide fills a void I saw as a new coach—no core resource. By filling this void, I believe I have made a contribution to the professional development of new coaches. I am honored to contribute to the profession while I gained so much knowledge about coaching and myself in the process. It is such a privilege to be in the field of education where I can perhaps spark the love of learning in many students and colleagues through my work with them.
References


