Coaching Matters offers a succinct summary of the research base and clarification of the types and roles of coaching. This book is certain to increase the efficacy of educators and have a direct, lasting impact on student learning.

— Jody Rutherford
Executive Director
Southern Alberta Professional Development Consortium

Coaching Matters provides educators with the background and tools to transfer the authors’ decades of experience and success into immediate effective practice. It is inspirational, educational, motivational, and a solid reference point for anyone considering or implementing coaching and for every coach committed to success for educators and students.

— Stephanie Hirsh
Executive Director
Learning Forward

The research shared in Coaching Matters on coaching practices and their impact on improving teacher and student learning is critical. The book gives us immediate access to the tools, resources, and strategies we need to support coaches and system leaders. Coaching Matters will be my “go to” book.

— Courtney W. Bitar
Coordinator, Instructional Coaching Program
Fairfax County Public Schools
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Just as the quality of teaching determines student success, the quality of coaching determines how well coaching succeeds with teachers. And just as the quality of teaching depends on the teacher’s expertise and classroom conditions, coaching depends on two factors: the coach’s skills and the conditions in which coaching occurs.

Joellen Killion and Cindy Harrison (2006) say that effective school-based coaches share core beliefs that influence their approach to working with others, as well as having teaching expertise, coaching skills, relationship skills, content expertise, and leadership skills. Table 3.1 elaborates on these characteristics. Coaches, mentors, and teacher leaders with these characteristics, in the right conditions, can have a significant effect on teachers’ instruction and student learning.
### Table 3.1 Characteristics of effective school-based coaches

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Beliefs</th>
<th>Teaching expertise</th>
<th>Coaching skills</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>An effective coach:</td>
<td>An effective coach:</td>
<td>An effective coach:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Is willing to learn.</td>
<td>• Is skilled in instructional planning.</td>
<td>• Understands and applies knowledge about adult development.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Has a passion for ongoing development.</td>
<td>• Demonstrates success in his or her work as a classroom teacher.</td>
<td>• Diagnoses teachers’ needs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Believes in others’ capacity to grow and develop.</td>
<td>• Reflects on his or her own practice.</td>
<td>• Aligns support to teachers’ identified needs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Has the attitude that everyone is important.</td>
<td>• Articulates his or her own practice.</td>
<td>• Communicates effectively.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Does not presume to have “The Answer.”</td>
<td>• Uses multiple methods of assessing students.</td>
<td>• Listens skillfully.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Understands his or her own assumptions and makes those transparent.</td>
<td>• Has strong classroom organization and management.</td>
<td>• Uses effective questioning skills.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Is committed to continuous improvement.</td>
<td>• Is fluent in multiple methods of delivering instruction.</td>
<td>• Understands and employs a specific reflection process.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Has moral purpose.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Can let go of feeling responsible for another person’s behaviors.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relationship skills</th>
<th>Content expertise</th>
<th>Leadership skills</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>An effective coach:</td>
<td>An effective coach:</td>
<td>An effective coach:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Has good interpersonal relationships.</td>
<td>• Possesses and applies appropriate, in-depth content knowledge.</td>
<td>• Stays abreast of best practices in professional learning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Wants to be part of a team.</td>
<td>• Uses research and theory to support instructional decisions.</td>
<td>• Engages others in developing plans for improvement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Fosters trust.</td>
<td>• Establishes a collegial learning environment to support teachers in reflecting on their practice.</td>
<td>• Maintains a productive culture.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Works effectively with teachers and principals.</td>
<td>• Stays current with changes in curricula and new instructional practices.</td>
<td>• Communicates the school’s vision.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Is respected by peers.</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Aligns work with school goals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Has patience for the learning process.</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Uses data to make decisions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Understands and applies knowledge about change.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Beliefs

The coach’s beliefs, attitudes, values, and dispositions are the basis for being able to work effectively with teachers. Fundamental dispositions include a willingness to learn and a passion for ongoing development — beliefs that the coach must convey to others. Effective coaches recognize that coaches, as well as the teachers they serve, must continually seek deeper understanding. Conveying a positive attitude about lifelong learning helps coaches model continuous learning for teachers.

Effective coaches convey the belief that others are capable of and committed to learning, growing, and developing as professional educators. Coaches who are tempted to assume that teachers who resist being coached are either unable or unwilling to learn first examine their own core beliefs.

Just as the classroom teacher is expected to believe that every child can learn and discover how to motivate and work with all learners, effective coaches believe that every teacher can learn, and they work to find ways to influence and engage teachers as learners. Committing to continuous improvement and the attitude that everyone in the learning community is important leads to a climate of respect, collegiality, and collective responsibility.

Effective coaches, regardless of their years in the classroom or as coaches, strive to understand each teacher’s needs, strengths, and goals, and they readily admit that they do not have a solution for all teachers’ problems. They do not assume they have The Answer that a teacher needs. They think aloud with teachers, transparently revealing and making public the data on which they base their assumptions and the thinking processes they used to arrive at their decisions.

Effective coaches demonstrate their beliefs by working side by side with teachers and teaching teams to support them in continuous learning to strengthen the quality of teaching. Coaches also model the belief that all students can succeed by using data; by designing, implementing, and evaluating classroom interventions; by using formative assessments; and by examining student work.

Effective coaches release themselves from taking responsibility for others’ behaviors. According to Mary Jane Even, “Adult learning is voluntary in all its dimensions — participation, acquisition, and outcomes” (1987, p. 22). Adults generally do not learn in an authentic way without opportunities to choose some, if not all, aspects of the learning (Knight, 2007).

If an adult learner chooses not to learn or grow, an insightful coach does not blame the individual, dismiss the opportunity, or abdicate responsibility. Instead, the coach looks for opportunities to influence the teacher in other ways, no matter how small or insignificant the opportunity may seem. The coach does not reproach himself for not having the power to change a less willing teacher or exert force to engender engagement. Rather, a coach acknowledges that providing different opportunities for learning may be necessary to bring along those less willing, and, ultimately, to accept that not everyone chooses change willingly. There clearly are times when supervisory efforts are needed to initiate change.

Teaching expertise

A prerequisite for becoming a coach often is having demonstrated expertise as a classroom teacher. Teachers who view coaches as successful teachers
are more open to coaching. Researchers studying literacy coaches in Florida reported:

In one school, teachers argued that their coach had credibility because she “did our job” and had many years of experience with and knowledge about teaching reading to diverse learners. As a result, one teacher explained, “I know it’s going to work if she suggests it.” Similarly, teachers in another school were quick to point out the vast knowledge base of their coach. “She’s the most effective reading coach I’ve worked with. She definitely knows her stuff,” said one teacher. In contrast, a perceived lack of teaching experience and knowledge in another case study school accounted for some teachers’ less enthusiastic appraisal of their reading coach. One social studies teacher stated, “I don’t think she had the reading background. … If you were to be a reading coach, you’d have taught reading for years so if someone came to you, you could say ‘Oh, you know what, I tried this one time.’ So there is more of a background knowledge to help.” As a result, many teachers in this school reported approaching experienced teachers, not the coach, for help with instructional matters. (Marsh et al., 2008, pp. 63-64)

Having teaching expertise adds to coaches’ credibility.

Having teaching expertise adds to coaches’ credibility and is the foundation for supporting teachers’ work. Coaches’ classroom teaching experience makes it possible for them to demonstrate lessons, co-teach, co-plan, or give teachers constructive feedback. Coaches have more credibility when they are fluent in multiple instructional methods that meet the needs of a range of learners, have covered several curricular areas, and know the theoretical or research base for making decisions about instruction.

Effective coaches also are able to reflect on their practices and articulate how they make decisions about implementing the practices they choose, modeling these skills for teachers as they help teachers to achieve the same level. They are able to help teachers decide which assessments to use to measure student progress. They effectively use formative and summative assessments to help teachers prepare students for district benchmark and summative assessments, and they help teams of teachers develop common assessments or individual teachers develop classroom assessments. Coaches also use their expertise in assessment to gather data and plan strategies to meet teachers’ needs.

Finally, coaches who have deep knowledge about and strong skills in classroom organization and management are more likely to be effective in helping teachers create productive learning environments. Experience in how to increase teaching time and establish routines and procedures that make the classroom a safe, orderly, and productive learning environment helps when working with teachers who want to increase their own expertise in these areas. Coaches can help teachers identify strategies that will lead to increased student engagement and on-task behavior.

Although coaches come to the role with teaching expertise, effective coaches continue to develop their content knowledge, pedagogical expertise, pedagogical content knowledge, and expertise in assessment as they coach so that they have an increased range of options for supporting teachers.

Coaching skills

Coaching has a greater effect if coaches are skilled in building teachers’ capacity to be resourceful, make informed decisions, solve problems, and adapt to meet student learning needs. Coaches
begin with an understanding of how adults learn and the stages of learning from novice to master teacher. The coach diagnoses teacher needs and determines the appropriate supports and interventions to address the teacher’s needs. Coaches use their knowledge of the goals of the coaching program, various roles of coaches, strategies coaches use, and different models of coaching (such as Cognitive CoachingSM, technical coaching, content coaching) to decide the most suitable coaching method to meet the teacher’s needs and achieve the coaching program’s goals.

Another core coaching skill is offering or providing support without judging a teacher’s effectiveness or implying that the teacher’s skills are inadequate. Florida researchers reported:

While knowledge and experience appear to be central to teachers’ perceptions of coach quality, the coach’s style or approach to working with teachers was another attribute widely cited in case study visits. For example, several teachers at one school commended the coach for “offering help without pushing it” and showing teachers “another option rather than making it feel like you’re doing something wrong.” (Marsh et al., 2008, p. 64)

To help develop a teacher’s expertise, an effective coach builds a relationship based on trust and respect. Effective coaches use communication skills that convey respect as they talk with teachers, such as pausing to allow time to formulate thoughtful responses, paraphrasing to clarify understanding, and questioning to promote deeper understanding and mine for information. Perhaps the most challenging and important communication skill that a coach can apply in order to be effective in his or her work is to listen with respect. Dennis Sparks describes committed listening as a type of listening that “allows the speaker to determine the agenda for what is said, seeks to understand the speaker’s views, is nonjudgmental, and honors the speaker’s perspective” (2005, p. 52). In order to understand teachers’ concerns, desires, and perspectives, coaches must learn to be good listeners.

Coaches use a variety of questioning skills to promote deeper understanding, probe for more information, and generate new ideas. Coaches encourage teachers to reflect on their practice by guiding them through a reflection process. A reflection process might be:

- Develop an understanding of one’s actions and the responses they elicited. What happened in this particular situation or series of events?
- Analyze the responses. What are possible reasons for the responses?
- Generate a list of lessons learned from the analysis and past knowledge. How is this experience similar to past experiences? What are you learning from this experience?
- Apply the lessons in future situations. How might this lesson influence one’s future actions?

**Relationship skills**

Effective coaches need good interpersonal relationships. The effective coach recognizes the power of collaboration and wants to be part of a team working toward common goals and managing issues productively. Effective coaches are less interested in being recognized for their own work than in having the team recognized for the work. Effective coaches understand the importance of establishing trust in their relationships and the importance of fostering trusting relationships across the school community, enabling them to work effectively with administrators and teachers. When trust exists between the coach and staff and between the principal and coach, the coach is more credible and more likely to have a positive influence on teacher practice and have peers’ respect. Effective coaches are patient with the
learning process because they understand adult learners’ needs and the change process. They recognize that teachers need and want support to implement changes, and they are patient and persistent as teachers learn new practices. They create and nurture a learning environment that fosters collaboration within and across teams of teachers within the school community so teachers feel less isolated as they implement new strategies.

**Content expertise**

One pathway to improving student learning is to deepen teachers’ content knowledge. Some coaches, particularly instructional coaches, may be challenged if they do not have expertise in various content areas. Coaches who are expected to support teachers in a single content area are more likely to be credible if they have experience teaching that content area and are offering support in the designated content only. On the other hand, coaches who are expected to work with teachers of all content areas face a greater challenge to know best practices within multiple content areas.

Coaches sometimes know that the best strategy when they do not have expertise in multiple content areas is to establish a collegial learning environment in which teachers are likely to learn with and from each other. Effective coaches then use strategies that engage teachers in reflecting on their practice using their own classroom data.

In either case, effective coaches keep their knowledge of best practices and content current. Coaches will find it particularly challenging to help teachers implement a curriculum they have not actually taught, so they must become and remain well versed in research-based instructional strategies, must actively learn about the curriculum, and must engage teachers in making sound decisions about curriculum and instruction to produce student results. The ability to help teachers understand the relationship between content knowledge, the curriculum, and decisions about pedagogy enhances coaches’ credibility with teachers and potentially leads to improved student performance.

**Leadership skills**

Coaches often do not have strong leadership skills in supporting adult learning (Marsh et al., 2008). Because coaching is essentially about professional learning, when coaches lack expertise about best practices in professional learning, their overall effectiveness is limited.

In addition to understanding effective professional learning, coaches apply skills in planning improvement efforts based on professional learning. They help individuals, teams, and the whole faculty:

- Set ambitious goals based on analyzing student, teacher, and school data;
- Identify indicators of success and benchmarks of progress;
- Plan professional learning needed to achieve the goals;
- Identify resources needed to accomplish the learning;
- Support implementation of classroom professional learning;
- Provide constructive feedback;
- Facilitate formative and summative assessments of progress toward the goal using student, educator, and school data; and
- Repeat the cycle.

As members of schoolwide committees, such as a school leadership team, coaches have opportunities to model how to set goals and monitor progress toward those goals for improved student learning. Coaches who step into leadership roles beyond their coaching role then model to other teachers the potential of teacher leadership and exert broader influence on the school’s goals for teacher and student learning. Coaches’ role as school leaders is essential in developing and
maintaining a collaborative culture that results in productive decision making and problem solving to address teachers’ ongoing challenges.

Effective coaches use data to influence teachers’ decisions about their classroom practices. They continually communicate the school’s vision and align their work with school goals. They help teachers develop individual and team goals aligned with the school’s goals and align collective efforts so that the teachers’ work is streamlined, seems less overwhelming because all are working to achieve the same results, and is complementary. Coaches’ ability to see overall school needs, assess individual teacher needs based on data, and use data to make decisions contributes to their overall success.

Finally, skillful coaches demonstrate a working knowledge of transitions and how change occurs. They understand that change is a process that takes time, and that individuals have stages of concern and experience different levels of use as they are expected to work in new and different ways. To help teachers manage change and improve their practice, coaches work with teachers to develop benchmarks and indicators of success. Since those who experience change respond in different ways, coaches have a repertoire of strategies to respond with so that they maintain a positive, supportive, and trusting relationship with teachers. Effective coaches apply research about change, such as the Concerns Based Adoption Model (CBAM), to understand teachers’ feelings and address their concerns. Research, theories, or models about change provide the coach a framework or roadmap from which to understand, support, and respond to teachers as they experience change.

**Context**

Coaches bring a wide range of beliefs, knowledge, skills, and expertise. Yet school conditions influence how effective the coach is. If trust among the staff and between the staff and school administrators is weak, teachers may be less likely to focus on their own continuous improvement and more likely to resist working with a coach. When coaches and teachers don’t have adequate time to collaborate, teachers may be less responsive to the opportunity to be coached. If staff members’ beliefs interfere with their own or students’ capacity to learn, even the most skillful coach is likely to meet with resistance. If staff members do not understand the coach’s role within the school, they may generate their own unhealthy explanations for coaching.

On the other hand, if the school schedule, values and goals, expectations for students and staff, and sense of collective responsibility support continuous improvement, a coach, even a novice coach, is likely to succeed.

**Effective coaches use data to influence teachers’ decisions about their classroom practices.**

How teachers and principals perceive the quality of their coach influences the coach’s work and its impact. Researchers have found a strong correlation between teachers’ assessment of the quality of coaching they received and their perceptions of coaching’s effects on their instruction (Marsh et al., 2008). In addition, principals’ assessment of the coach’s ability to support adult learners was positively associated with teachers’ and principals’ perceptions of coaches’ influence (Marsh et al., 2008). What this means is that coaching works best in schools where the staff understand the purpose of coaching; the coach is well prepared for his role; the coach exhibits skillfulness in his interactions with staff members; and the principal has confidence in the coach’s abilities to serve in the role.
Angelique Iyer has been a middle school instructional coach in her small district for the last three years. She was a science teacher in the same school before becoming a coach.

Her transition into her new role went smoothly because she was a masterful, well-respected teacher and because she had extensive training that positioned her to be successful from the start. Both her immediate supervisor — the school’s assistant principal — and the teachers she works with report she has been supportive and has contributed to their professional learning. Although the district is small, the leadership team wanted all of the new coaches to have training to prepare them for their work. The district arranged for Iyer and her colleagues throughout the district to take part in a six-day district coaching institute during the summer before they started in the role. Iyer learned the importance of establishing trust with her principal and teachers so they would be more receptive to working with her. She took a deliberate and thoughtful approach to building trust in her new role. She made sure to follow through with her commitments, worked on her communication skills, took care not to convey judgment about teachers’ practices, was a good listener, and regularly asked teachers’ opinions.

Iyer hoped that her colleagues would recognize that she knew about effective instruction and that though she had taught science, would recognize that she knew how to use curriculum guides; how to design effective instruction, assessments, and learning tasks to engage students; and how to build learning communities within classrooms. She wanted to work as a partner with her colleagues, not as an expert, so she repeatedly reminded them that the coach’s role is to support teachers, not to evaluate or supervise them.

During the first few months in her new role, Iyer listened more than she talked. She asked teachers to describe their successes and challenges with student learning. She invited them to identify
students whom they wanted to succeed who were not meeting expectations. She engaged teachers in collaborative teams to look at student data.

After the first few months, however, lyer felt she needed to do more to focus on effective instruction in all disciplines, particularly to engage students more actively in the learning process. Through this time, most of her work was with teacher teams, meeting during common planning periods to facilitate teacher conversations about assessment data. lyer worked with a few teachers individually, and their feedback to the principal was positive.

In her weekly conversation with the principal and assistant principal, lyer asked to have time at the following two faculty meetings to help staff examine student classroom engagement. She selected three articles on the role of active student engagement in learning and assigned each teacher one of the articles to read before the faculty meeting. She then prepared several questions related to each article to guide the staff’s discussion.

At the two meetings, lyer facilitated whole-faculty, small-group, grade-level, and subject-specific conversations about the articles and the implications for teaching and learning in the school. At the second meeting, lyer asked staff members to identify strategies for engaging students and to identify what each department would do to improve student engagement. After the second faculty meeting, she provided mini-lessons to each department on using different strategies aligned with their lessons and disciplines to engage students.

In a subsequent meeting with the principal and assistant principal, lyer asked for help in thinking about how to assess whether student engagement was increasing and whether the emphasis on engagement affected student achievement. She wanted to help teachers know that their efforts affected student academic success.
Reflection questions

• What characteristics of an effective coach did Iyer exhibit? Which would you characterize as strengths and which might be areas of focus for further development?

• How does Iyer’s preparation to become a coach compare with your own? In considering Iyer’s actions in the first few months of the school year, what do you think was emphasized in her preparation?

• Iyer made some assumptions about how to begin work as a coach. What were some of her assumptions, and how do they align with the characteristics of effective coaches?

• Iyer met frequently with the principal and assistant principal. How did those meetings support her as a coach and help her continue to develop her expertise?

• Iyer acknowledged she didn’t know everything she wanted to know about coaching for instructional improvement and sought assistance to fill those gaps. Using the characteristics of effective school-based coaches in Table 3.1, identify your own strengths as a coach and some areas for growth. How will you get support to improve your coaching practice?
Central office administrators

- Set clear expectations for the coach’s roles and responsibilities.
- Provide or help provide professional learning to allow coaches to become more effective in all facets of their role.
- Give coaches opportunities to assess themselves on the degree to which they possess the characteristics of effective coaches.
- Create a coach evaluation aligned with the goals of the coaching program, expectations for coaches’ work, and the criteria for effectiveness.
- Give coaches a format to set goals in each of the areas of effectiveness and allow them to monitor their progress over time.
- Offer coaches opportunities to network with and learn from each other.

Building administrators

- Help the coach set goals for professional growth based on the characteristics of effective coaches.
- Meet regularly with the coach to help monitor progress on his or her professional growth plan.
- Support the coach in accomplishing the coach’s professional growth plan goals.
- Provide opportunities for the coach to engage in professional learning related to his or her professional goals.

Coaches

- Develop awareness of the characteristics of an effective coach.
- Conduct a self-assessment of the skills, knowledge, and attitudes needed to be an effective coach.
- Solicit the principal’s and teachers’ feedback on your strengths and areas for growth.
- Establish formal goals for professional growth related to the characteristics of an effective coach, and monitor your progress over time.
- Seek multiple opportunities to enhance the skills and knowledge you need to become more effective as a coach.
# TOOL 3.2
## Instructional coach self-assessment

Complete the following self-assessment tool to gain deeper insight into your characteristics as a coach.

Consider the degree to which each statement is true for you, and mark the corresponding number. Reflect on the results, and revisit the tool periodically to monitor your own growth.

1 = Not at all true of me  
2 = Somewhat true of me  
3 = Very true of me

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CATEGORY: BELIEF</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. I am willing to learn.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. I have a passion for ongoing development and learning.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3. I believe that everyone is important.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>4. I believe in the capacity of others to grow and develop.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>5. I do not assume I have the answer.</td>
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<td>6. I am committed to continuous improvement.</td>
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<td>7. I have moral purpose.</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CATEGORY: TEACHING EXPERTISE</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. I am skilled in instructional planning.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. I have strong classroom organization and management skills.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. I am fluent in multiple methods of delivering instruction.</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. I use multiple methods to assess student learning.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. I have demonstrated success as a classroom teacher.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. I articulate my practice.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. I reflect on my practice.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
## TOOL 3.2 cont’d

### CATEGORY: COACHING SKILLS

- **1.** I understand and apply knowledge about adult development.
- **2.** I listen skillfully.
- **3.** I communicate effectively.
- **4.** I use effective questioning skills.
- **5.** I understand and use a specific reflection process.
- **6.** I diagnose teacher needs.

### CATEGORY: RELATIONSHIP SKILLS

- **1.** I want to be part of a team.
- **2.** I work effectively with teachers and principals.
- **3.** I build trusting relationships.
- **4.** I am respected by my peers.
- **5.** I am patient with people as they learn.

### CATEGORY: CONTENT EXPERTISE

- **1.** I possess and apply appropriate, in-depth content knowledge.
- **2.** I use extensive research and theory to support instructional decisions.

### CATEGORY: LEADERSHIP SKILLS

- **1.** I understand and apply knowledge about change.
- **2.** I communicate the school’s vision.
- **3.** I align work with school goals.
- **4.** I use data to drive decisions.
- **5.** I engage others in developing improvement plans.
- **6.** I maintain a productive culture.

**Source:** Adapted from *Taking the lead: New roles for teachers and school-based coaches*, by Joellen Killion and Cindy Harrison, Oxford, OH: National Staff Development Council, 2006.
### TOOL 3.3

**Instructional coach self-assessment activity**

**Characteristics of effective school-based coaches**

**Directions**

1. Read the list of qualities of effective instructional coaches.
2. Write a plus sign (+) next to the attributes you believe are your strengths.
3. Write an asterisk (*) next to attributes you want to improve.
4. Place a question mark (?) next to those you aren’t sure about.

<table>
<thead>
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<th>BELIEFS</th>
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<th>COACHING SKILLS</th>
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<td>Has strong classroom organization and management skills</td>
<td>Listens skillfully</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Believes that everyone is important</td>
<td>Is fluent in multiple methods of delivering instruction</td>
<td>Communications effectively</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Believes in the capacity of others to grow and develop</td>
<td>Uses multiple methods to assess student learning</td>
<td>Communications effectively</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does not presume to have the answer</td>
<td>Demonstrates success as a classroom teacher</td>
<td>Uses effective questioning skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is committed to continuous improvement</td>
<td>Articulates practice</td>
<td>Understands and uses a specific reflection process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has moral purpose</td>
<td>Reflects on practice</td>
<td>Diagnoses teachers’ needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can let go of being responsible for another person’s behaviors</td>
<td></td>
<td>Aligns support with teachers’ identified needs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**TOOL 3.3 cont’d**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RELATIONSHIP SKILLS</th>
<th>CONTENT EXPERTISE</th>
<th>LEADERSHIP SKILLS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wants to be part of a team</td>
<td>Possesses and applies appropriate, in-depth content knowledge</td>
<td>Understands and applies knowledge about change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Works effectively with teachers and principals</td>
<td>Uses extensive research and theory to support instructional decisions</td>
<td>Communicates the school’s vision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Builds trusting relationships</td>
<td></td>
<td>Aligns work with school goals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is respected by peers</td>
<td></td>
<td>Uses data to drive decisions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is willing to be patient with people as they engage in the learning process</td>
<td></td>
<td>Engages others in developing improvement plans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Maintains a productive culture</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Systemwide results start with strong coaches.

Effective coaches can ensure that 90% of staff learning transfers into practice in the classroom.

Learning Forward’s Coaches’ Academy provides a face-to-face program at your location to give your coaches the knowledge and skills they need to excel. Your team’s learning is then extended with ongoing one-on-one support from Learning Forward’s master coaches.

Empower your coaches for success.

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Does coaching matter? Yes! Coaching can increase teacher effectiveness and student learning. Successful coaching, however, doesn’t happen just by hiring dynamic coaches. Successful coaching requires strong leadership, a clear focus and goals, essential resources, well-prepared staff, monitoring, and rigorous evaluations.

This book brushes aside the magic and mystery to reveal how coaching can make a difference. Each chapter describes an element of what research and the authors’ firsthand experiences know it takes to make coaching effective. The book covers:

• Characteristics that distinguish effective coaching programs;
• Attributes that affect teaching practices, student achievement, and school culture;
• Practices that lead to results for teachers and students;
• Responsibilities of coaches;
• Strategies for individual coaches, principals, and school systems to build a stronger coaching program; and more.

Every chapter is accompanied by tools, including extended readings, resources to use with teachers, strategies for accomplishing the work, and real-life examples to build on.

Coaches and those who support, serve, and supervise them — from principals to district leaders — can use Coaching Matters to begin or refine a program, based on expert guidance from authors who have done this work.

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