Move beyond management: Coaching for school leaders translates into student achievement
Principals are often neglected in receiving coaching

“Although the nation has developed an intense focus on instructional coaching and teacher leadership...leadership development and principal coaching have received less attention.”

-Kay Psencik

The Coach’s Craft: Powerful Practices to Support School Leaders

Coaching is a critical element of Psencik's theory of change for principals' learning and professional growth. The essential elements of the theory are:

1. **Articulate the skills, dispositions, and behaviors of effective principals.**
   - Psencik says district leadership teams should define a limited list of skills, based on research, that principals should have. They might begin with the stem: “In this district, our principals will...”

2. **Develop a system of self-reflection, goal setting, and portfolio development.**
   - Principals then assess their own effectiveness using focus groups of staff, students, parents, and community members; perception inventories; or other tools.

3. **Close the knowing-doing gap through intensive learning.**
   - Principals spend time learning in depth about topics needed to strengthen their leadership, such as building trust or creating effective collaboration.

4. **Create a community of learners.**
   - Principals become less isolated by creating their own learning communities to support one another.

5. **Establish coaches for principals.**
   - Coaches help leaders change behaviors and develop new skills and strategies. Without coaching, Psencik writes (2011, p. 32), past experience has shown that other learning is “insufficient and likely will fail to lead to principals learning new skills.”

6. **Monitor progress.**
   - Principals establish measures of effectiveness, such as portfolios, that can help answer questions such as, “What new behaviors am I using in school? What effect are those behaviors having on teacher practice? What are the results in student learning?”

7. **Celebrate success.**
   - Publicly sharing accomplishments and the effects of the learning creates an image of the leader as learner and brings the cycle to the beginning of the circle again.

In Ft. Wayne, Psencik used the cycle in her work with a small cohort of principals of low-performing schools during six days of summer professional learning. Psencik worked as a leadership coach with each principal during this time, as well as with the group. She also helped the leaders plan the professional learning that they would lead in their own schools and helped them learn leadership skills by sharing facilitation of the sessions.

High-performing principals create high-achieving schools.

The value of a coach

Coaches can help principals

• Define areas of need
• Define goals
• Identify what improvement would look like
• Establish measurements to monitor progress

Read the full article, published in *The Learning Principal* (Summer, 2012).

Download these accompanying tools: **Theory of change and logic model**, and **Attributes of a good coach**

Available at www.learningforward.org/principal.
The Coach’s Craft: Powerful Practices to Support School Leaders

By Kay Psencik

Explore ways to improve the coaching practices of listening, observing, planning and committing to new action.

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With a self-assessment tool, coaches can hone in on their own strengths and weaknesses to find ways to support leaders in improving schools.

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