

13 TEACHERS TEACHING TEACHERS™

FOR A DYNAMIC COMMUNITY OF TEACHER LEADERS

ROLE: Data coach

PURPOSE: To ensure that student achievement data drive decisions in classroom and school

BY JOELLEN KILLION AND CYNTHIA HARRISON

Second in an eight-part series about roles of the school-based coach

A relatively new role for instructional coaches is assisting teachers to look at student achievement, perception, demographic, and process data. In this role, coaches help teams of teachers and/or individual teachers to examine data, understand their

students' strengths and weaknesses, and identify instructional strategies, structures, programs, or curriculum to address identified needs. Analyzing school and department- or grade-level trends in the data is only the first step toward designing and adjusting classroom instruction to address the identified needs of students. Coaches frequently facilitate data dialogues with teams of teachers. Coaches often work with building administrators to identify necessary data to examine and ways to display the data so the analysis process with teachers is effective and efficient.

During data dialogues, coaches facilitate interaction about what types of data are being examined, what the data mean, and what the next steps are by asking probing questions to guide data analysis. When coaches focus conversations on data about student learning in a positive and productive way, the dialogue empowers teachers rather than threatens them.



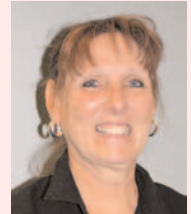
Our goal: All teachers in all schools will experience high-quality professional learning as part of their daily work.

WHAT'S INSIDE

NSDC profile

Joanie Esparza was sold on the job of Student Achievement Coach by the professional development opportunities.

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Evaluation tool

Size up the Student Achievement Coach.

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Focus on the NSDC standards

Joellen Killion explains how school coaches use the Data-Driven standard.

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NSDC tool

The Tuning Protocol is an efficient process for examining student work.

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SCENARIO:

Data coach at work

Nicky Romero, the student achievement coach at Cherokee Elementary School,* works with the principal and assistant principal to plan the upcoming data conversation with 5th-grade teachers. Everyone knows they are a tough group and resist changing their classroom practices. The coach and administrators look through the 5th-grade data and identify trends and patterns. Following the meeting with administrators, Romero designs a data analysis protocol to use in the meeting with 5th-grade teachers.

Romero facilitates the meeting and invites the principal to explain the 5th-grade data and provide a short overview of the whole school's results. Romero gives the team a structured data analysis protocol to guide their examination of grade-level data. The 5th-grade teachers spend several hours examining data. First, teachers celebrate student successes and identify strategies

they believe contributed to those successes. The protocol then guides the team to identify gaps between what they want students to know and be able to do and actual student performance.

Next, teachers complete an advanced organizer (created by the coach in advance) that tracks individual student achievement in literacy and math. Teachers record each student's performance level and add comments about other factors that may influence a student's performance. Focused on student needs and with problem areas identified, Romero encourages teachers to examine their instruction, curriculum, and resources to find leverage points for addressing gaps in student learning. Teachers identify possible interventions, including flexible grouping, ways to differentiate upcoming lessons, and alternative instructional resources and strategies. As the teachers leave the meeting, they agree to meet with the coach and principal in five weeks to re-examine student progress.

** Fictitious person and school*

Creating opportunities to identify areas of need is the first step in planning how to address those needs.

Knowledge and skills

To lead data dialogues, coaches know how to establish a risk-free and blame-free environment that allows teachers to feel safe. Coaches require a thorough understanding of various types and forms of available data, an understanding of what each data source assesses, and what conclusions can be validly drawn from any data set. Coaches use strong facilitation and questioning skills to formulate appropriate questions and to guide teachers in examining data thoroughly and accurately. Coaches also know how to assist teachers to plan and take specific actions based on the data to alter their instruction.

Challenges

- Coaches face four challenges in this role.
- The first challenge is **displaying the data**

in user-friendly formats which requires coaches to consider the level of sophistication of teachers in analyzing and interpreting data and adjusting the data displays to accommodate the variation in teachers' understanding of data.

- A second challenge is the coaches' **preparation to understand the data** before facilitating data dialogues. Coaches must prepare a protocol — a series of questions — to guide data analysis and interpretation and action planning.

- **Assisting grade levels or departments to make decisions based on the data**, the third challenge, is a necessary and difficult part of effective data dialogues. Coaches help teachers move beyond what the data mean to what actions will close the gap between where their students are and where they want them to be.

- The fourth challenge is **creating a non-threatening, supportive environment** that encourages teachers to be open and honest in data analysis. ♦

9 roles of the school-based coach

- Catalyst for change
- Classroom supporter
- Curriculum specialist
- **Data coach**
- Instructional specialist
- Learning facilitator (T3, Sept. 2005)
- Mentor
- Resource provider
- School leader

T3 presents one role of the school-based coach each month.

From *9 Roles of the School-Based Coach* by Joellen Killion and Cynthia Harrison