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# Coaches zero in on quality teaching

Quality teaching is the heart of a coach's work each day. What a teacher knows and does is one of the strongest factors influencing student success. When coaches focus their interactions with teachers on quality teaching, they have greater leverage to influence teachers' instructional practice and student learning. Quality teaching has three dimensions. Coaches assist teachers to refine instruction, deepen content knowledge, and use appropriate assessment for and of learning. Through their interactions with teachers, coaches expand teachers' knowledge and skills related to content, assessment, and instruction, help teachers become conscious of their decisions and successes, and increase teachers' efficacy.

When teachers have deep content knowledge about the subjects they teach, they are able to break down complex concepts, skills, and principles into discrete components that they can then sequence as developmentally appropriate for students. Deep content knowledge allows a teacher to distinguish between enduring understandings and those that are nice to know. They are able to develop essential questions to guide the development of units and lessons. Teachers design interdisciplinary lessons built around enduring understanding.

Coaches engage teachers in deepening their

content knowledge by organizing learning experiences in which teachers are first readers, writers, mathematicians, historians, scientists, musicians, and artists before they engage them as teachers of their subjects. Coaches help teachers access and use the approved curriculum, design standards-based units and lessons, and explore ways to differentiate curriculum for students with different levels of achievement.

In addition to deep content knowledge, successful teachers know how to use both formative and summative assessment strategies to measure student progress toward mastery of the content

## QUALITY TEACHING

Staff development that improves the learning of all students deepens educators' content knowledge, provides them with research-based instructional strategies to assist students in meeting rigorous academic standards, and prepares them to use various types of classroom assessments appropriately.



standards. They know how to design various types of assessments that permit students to demonstrate what they know and can do without the limitation of an assessment format that interferes with their success.

Coaches work with teachers to develop their assessment literacy. They engage teachers in designing assessments that are varied, authentic, and differentiated. They facilitate teams as they develop common benchmark or end-of-course assessments and work together to score those assessments. They examine student work to determine what students know and can

do. Coaches explore with teachers how to integrate more assessment *for* learning and less assessment *of* learning. Assessment *for* learning engages students in tasks that extend their learning. The assessment itself becomes an integral part of the instructional process. Assessment *of* learning provides evidence of what they know and can do and marks a transition in the learning process, such as the end of a unit.

Teachers make multiple decisions regarding instruction when they plan lessons and while teaching lessons. While planning, they determine which instructional strategy is most appropriate for the content and students they are teaching. They select from among research-based instructional strategies to increase the chance that students will be successful. They plan accommodations for students in their classrooms who learn differently or who have special learning needs. While teaching, they make adjustments continuously based on student responses. They may add more examples, introduce additional information for enrichment, provide additional practice, or revisit a previous concept if students are not ready to move ahead.

Because teaching is such a complex task that often seems simple on the surface, coaches help teachers become aware of the decisions they are making by engaging teachers in planning and reflection conversations. In planning conversations, coaches use skillful questioning to guide teachers to identify and make decisions about the multiple factors that contribute to a lesson's success and to increase their consciousness about the reasons for those decisions. After a teaching episode, coaches engage teachers in a reflection conversation in which they not only review what occurred in the lesson, but also form conclusions about what the teacher learned and identify how

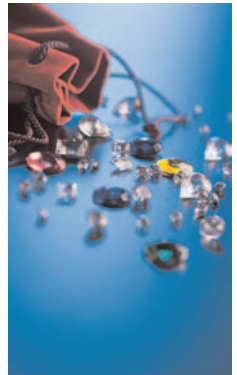
that learning might influence future teaching episodes. The protocol on p. 6 offers one way for coaches to interact with teachers about a teaching episode.

As teachers seek to refine the quality of their teaching, coaches use multiple strategies. They might provide professional learning opportunities that develop teachers' understanding of their content area. They might facilitate study groups on topics related to quality teaching. They might read together and discuss research on effective instructional strategies. Coaches might hold demonstration lessons in which several teachers observe the coach teach a lesson and then meet with the coach to debrief the demonstration. Coaches might co-teach with teachers to boost teachers' confidence

to try a new instructional strategy or teach a new concept with which the teacher may not feel completely comfortable. Coaches may meet with teachers in teams and facilitate the design of more authentic assessments. They might help teachers become more aware of the types of data about student performance that are naturally available within the lesson and how to capture and analyze those data.

When coaches interact with teachers, they encourage teachers to identify their actions and decisions and also to develop consciousness about the reasons. Their interactions with teachers are designed to build a teacher's sense of efficacy. Efficacy is the degree to which a teacher sees himself or herself as influential in student learning and the teacher's sense of confidence that he or she has the knowledge and skills to teach. Coaches can influence efficacy by identifying what teachers are doing well and by expanding teachers' knowledge and skills about content, assessment, and instruction. ♦

How can coaches help teachers reflect on lessons?  
HERE IS A FORMAT ON P. 6.



**Multiple strategies are in the coach's treasure chest when leading the teacher to refine the quality of teaching.**

Coaches can influence efficacy by identifying what teachers are doing well and by expanding teachers' knowledge and skills about content, assessment, and instruction.

**For more information about NSDC's Standards for Staff Development, see**

[www.nsd.org/standards/index.cfm](http://www.nsd.org/standards/index.cfm)