



Data, coaching programs improve Jeffco instructional practices

Our superintendent for Jeffco Public Schools (Colo.), Cindy Stevenson, has tremendous value for building teacher capacity through professional development. She demonstrates that belief through her actions and words.

The district began an instructional coaching model almost a decade ago based on our values and beliefs. Jeffco believes that the number one impact on student achievement is a highly effective teacher. To ensure highly effective teachers in all classrooms, teachers must have access to job-embedded professional learning that is focused on their particular needs based on their school and student data. Teachers trust teachers and respond more positively to non-evaluative coaching relationships, working side by side with peers whose focus is support. Coaches are there to co-teach, to co-plan, to analyze data, and to help teachers design lessons and effectively use data.

We now have full-time coaches in all 95 elementary schools and all 19 middle schools. We train our coaches to be data coaches, instructional and curriculum specialists, change agents, and school improvement specialists. Instructional coaching is the foundation of our districtwide professional learning.

SIDE-BY-SIDE LEARNING

We bring our instructional coaches in once a month for a full day of professional development. We also bring them in once a month to do

side-by-side learning with their principals. That professional development is structured based on district student achievement data and our district improvement plan. We look to the coaches and principals to then use that professional learning, along with their site school improvement plan, what their student achievement data are telling them, and what they know about their particular teachers, to tailor their site-based professional learning and to monitor teacher transfer of the learning into classroom practice. We use coaches' professional development as a trickle-down model, a way to align the learning occurring at all levels of the district.

Our coaching program is dynamic. One thing we have learned is that the coaching program has to continually adapt. We adjust our program every year based on district data, district goals, and feedback from teachers and principals. This year, we implemented student-centered coaching cycles in which coaches work with classroom teachers in four- to six-week cycles. They collect formative achievement data, set goals, plan lessons, and teach using a gradual release model. Finally, they collect summative achievement data to determine effectiveness and next steps. We also have tweaked the program to align the goals of the individual coach with the school's goals.

We use data to evaluate the program. An example is the principal leadership survey, in which principals at the elementary and middle level indicated that maintaining the

instructional coach program was their top priority, even in the face of budget cuts. In last year's teacher survey, more than 1,770 classroom teachers responded, and 80% found coaching effective and believed coaching has helped them improve their instructional practice as classroom teachers.

REACHING OUT FOR SUPPORT

As we look at teacher effectiveness measures and the implementation of the Common Core, we can't ask teachers to deal with that magnitude of change and to transform their practice in their classrooms and not give them the support they need. Will all of them take advantage of it? Absolutely not. But as more accountability measures are imposed on classroom teachers, you'll see more of them reaching out to their coaches for support.



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