



Make coaching's purpose clear, and make its results known

Across a range of fields, we celebrate effective coaches and recognize their role in supporting growth and high achievement. Many of us hire coaches to assist us in meeting personal and professional goals. Parents with means hire coaches to give their children the extra edge in sports and academic competitions.

In the context of professional learning, we have seen the number of coaches and opportunities for educators to experience coaching grow exponentially.

Even as the use of coaches increases, many stakeholders question the real impact of coaching. There are research studies that show examples of coaching that doesn't impact student achievement. However, as Killion, Harrison, Bryan, and Clifton point out in their book *Coaching Matters* (Learning Forward, 2012), numerous studies show the value of coaching as well as the importance of considering the implementation of coaching practices when evaluating its impact.

The role of coaches has grown exponentially in the business field as well. According to an article on *Forbes.com*, companies invested \$1 billion in executive coaching in 2011. The author cites a global survey of coaching clients by PriceWaterhouseCoopers and the

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Association Resource Center showing that the mean return on investment for companies investing in coaching was seven times the initial investment, with over a quarter reporting a return on investment of 10 to 49 times (Symonds, 2011).

These and other studies demonstrate that critical characteristics of effective coaching include clarity of purpose, effective implementation, and a strong coaching methodology. These findings lead me to make two requests of you:

We must be clear on our purpose and goals for our coaching investments. Just as with any professional learning, we must know the outcomes we seek and how we intend to measure them. Our coaches need to know the practices they are expected to employ and engage in ongoing learning themselves to implement them with fidelity.

Most of the failures in our field can be traced to poor execution, not poor planning. When we ground our plans — and our implementation — in the Standards for Professional Learning, we can have confidence in our strategy to improve outcomes for educators and students.

We must share the results of our investments. Where possible, hire external evaluators to examine and document the results of professional learning investments. You may need to write your own story and share it with those around you who are responsible



for supporting or funding your work.

Such stories and evidence of impact can elevate the importance of this work. We offer a place to share your story through www.learningforward.org/get-involved/tell-your-story. Read more about this on p. 65.

I am a firm believer in the power of coaching. I have had my own coach since the day I was appointed executive director of Learning Forward. I attribute many of my most successful outcomes to the support of my coach. I am committed to seeing that every educator has the benefit of a great coaching experience. You can help us make that happen.

REFERENCES

Killion, J., Harrison, C., Bryan, C., & Clifton, H. (2012). *Coaching matters*. Oxford, OH: Learning Forward.

Symonds, M. (2011, January 21). Executive coaching — another set of clothes for the Emperor? *Forbes.com*. Available at www.forbes.com/sites/mattsymonds/2011/01/21/executive-coaching-another-set-of-clothes-for-the-emperor. ■