



BUILDING BLOCKS

A VARIETY OF COACHING ROLES CAN STRENGTHEN TEAMS

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In our work with schools and districts across the country, we find there is a strong expectation that collaborative teams will improve student learning. Many districts also expect instructional coaches to be a part of these teams, although there is much confusion about what roles they should play within a team.

We hear questions like: I wonder why my principal asks me to attend team meetings? What do I bring to this team? If I am not the facilitator, what should I be doing? Do teachers wonder why I am here? Do they see me as an evaluator or an outsider? Are they looking at me as someone who adds extra work or slows the team down? What exactly is my role?

Approaching collaborative work from a perspective of collective efficacy can help address these questions and clarify

the coach's role in teams. Collective efficacy is defined as a team's belief in its capability to successfully accomplish specific goals and joint work (Bandura, 1997; Kreitner & Kinicki, 2007).

John Hattie, who regularly compares the effects of multiple educational policies and practices with a rigorous statistical method, ranks collective efficacy as a top factor in positively influencing student achievement (Hattie, 2015).

Developing collective efficacy takes concerted attention and leadership. Coaches are well-positioned to provide such leadership because of their skill sets and their responsibility to support teachers' success. Furthermore, a frame of collective efficacy can focus coaches' work with collaborative teams and provide entry points for action.



OF COLLABORATION

A COACHING FRAMEWORK FOR BUILDING COLLECTIVE EFFICACY

To guide coaches in building collective efficacy, we find very useful the work of Michael Fullan, who has identified five conditions that must be developed to foster collective efficacy (Fullan, personal communication, November 25, 2016; Hirsh, 2016):

- The team must create a culture based on trust.
- The team must commit to transparency in practice and results.
- The team must create a climate of nonjudgmentalism.
- The team must be specific in terms of the practices it will employ and actually employ them.
- The team must be clear on the specific evidence it will collect to document growth, and it must collect and use the evidence to improve professional practices.

Coaches can encourage and support all of these components of collective efficacy. How they do so will depend on their roles, in the school as a whole and in the

team specifically, as well as on the team's and the school's needs. Coaches play many different roles.

There are times that an instructional coach must be the expert and operate in the role of consultant. Other times, an instructional coach works side by side with a team of teachers collaboratively. Often, a coach provides the team opportunities for reflective thinking, which can most deeply support the development of the team's efficacy.

Each role is instrumental to building the elements of collective efficacy. Being specific about which role is needed and when can help coaches choose specific strategies.

In the sections that follow, we share examples of professional learning approaches that can be effective within each of the different roles. Adapting from the work of Lipton and Wellman (2001), we use the language of consultant, collaborator, and coach of reflective thinking to describe how an instructional coach might interact with collaborative teams focused on improving the five conditions for collective efficacy.

1 TYPES OF COACHING SUPPORT TO BUILD A CULTURE OF TRUST	
Role	Professional learning approach
Coach as consultant	Explicitly teach and model the importance of creating and monitoring team norms. (See sidebar at right.)
	Provide tools for team members to learn about the assets and strengths of one another.
	Teach the team about models of change, such as the Concerns-Based Adoption Model (Hall & Hord, 2001).
Coach as collaborator	Be fully present by listening completely and limiting personal multitasking.
	Co-design with team members and then implement a process to monitor team norms.
	Receive and provide feedback regarding development of the five conditions.
Coach of reflective thinking	Coach the team facilitator around his or her professional goals related to facilitation.
	Through inquiry-based questions, engage the team in reflection that develops all members' ability to speak honestly, take responsibility for their actions, and reflect on team progress.
	Coach team members to develop individual self-awareness of their contributions to the health and accomplishments of the team.

5 CONDITIONS FOR COLLECTIVE EFFICACY

1. The team must create a culture based on trust.

"The truth is that trust rules. Trust rules your personal credibility. Trust rules your ability to get things done. Trust rules your team's cohesiveness. Trust rules your organization's innovativeness and performance. Trust rules just about everything you do" (Kouzes & Posner, 2010).

Collective efficacy starts with trust. Coaches must be intentional about building and maintaining trust so that a safe learning space can exist. No substantive conversations about teaching and learning can occur without trust.

The work of Bryk and Schneider reveals the importance of developing relational trust in schools. Their studies show that when trust is absent, schools have a 1-in-7 chance of making gains with student learning (Bryk & Schneider, 2002).

Trust must therefore be part of the initial and ongoing work

EXAMPLES OF TEAM NORMS

As members of this team, we will:

- Begin and end meetings on time.
- Be present physically and mentally.
- Reflect on our progress regularly.
- Be congruent with words and actions.
- Be intentional about knowing each other and honoring and respecting each other's feelings and perspectives.
- Support publicly the decisions of the group.
- Speak directly to the person with whom you have an issue and reach agreement on next steps.

We will hold ourselves and each other accountable. We will review the norms at the beginning of each meeting, choose one to focus on, and evaluate progress.

coaches do in teams. Fortunately, there are many ways they can build trust, including those listed in the table at left.

2. The team must commit to transparency in practice and results.

"What do schools look like when all the adults in the school community care about the success of all the other adults?" (Rutherford et al., 2011, p. vi)

It is important for teams to openly examine their current practices in relation to student results and commit to being vulnerable for the sake of their own and their students' learning. But some teams are not used to publicly sharing student data and discussing its relationship to their professional practices.

Once trust is in place, this kind of transparency is essential for practices to change and learning to improve. By using the professional learning approaches outlined in the table on p. 58, coaches can help make openness the norm and team members feel safe to share their work.

3. The team must create a climate of nonjudgmentalism.

"By transparency I mean openness about results. I also mean openness about what practices are most strongly connected to successful outcomes" (Fullan, 2008, p. 99).

Judgmental behaviors shut down team learning. When individuals operate from a place of fear, assumption, and generalization, understanding of other perspectives is limited. Meetings can become a place to vent or blame, which makes team members hesitant to share openly and in the spirit of learning.

The goal becomes self-preservation rather than what it

IDEAS

2 TYPES OF COACHING SUPPORT TO DEVELOP TEAM TRANSPARENCY		3 TYPES OF COACHING SUPPORT TO CREATE A CLIMATE OF NONJUDGMENTALISM	
Role	Professional learning approach	Role	Professional learning approach
Coach as consultant	Provide structures for teachers to visit one another's classrooms for learning purposes.	Coach as consultant	Teach the team the communication and language skills of assuming positive intent.
	Provide the team facilitator with structures and processes to support the sharing of student and teacher work.		Focus the team on the use of objective, quantifiable data versus subjective, assumption-based data.
	Scaffold support for teachers who are hesitant to join collaborative data conversations by providing data conversation protocols.		Provide protocols for practicing conversations that honor differences in beliefs about teaching and learning.
Coach as collaborator	Engage with the team in risk-taking by setting public professional goals for yourself, asking for support and feedback from team members.	Coach as collaborator	As a team member, model asking for feedback and ideas.
	Together with team members, identify a problem of practice, engage in action research or inquiry, and analyze the results.		Stay curious, adopt an inquisitive mindset, and consider multiple perspectives.
	As a team member, share successful and unsuccessful classroom practices after a cycle of inquiry for the purpose of learning from one another.		Recognize individual and team successes.
Coach of reflective thinking	Listen, paraphrase, and use questions to clarify or expand thinking, deepen reflection, and encourage self- and team assessment for continuous growth. This kind of deep authentic reflection on practice takes courage when done as a team.	Coach of reflective thinking	Allow team members to hear their words and clarify intentions as needed by listening fully and reflecting their words back to them through paraphrasing.
	Lead planning and reflective conversations with the team.		Invite thinking through the use of open-ended, reflective questions that include exploratory language that assumes positive intent.
	Through one-on-one coaching conversations, develop confidence for professional risk taking during team meetings. Coach individuals to develop their own sense of efficacy as a team member. Support them in identifying their values and beliefs and aligning their actions with values and beliefs.		Support the team facilitator in providing group members equity in opportunity to speak, advocate, and make decisions.

should be: to create a safe learning environment for adults to take risks and experiment with a focus on their own and students' learning.

Coaches can play an important role in establishing a nonjudgmental climate among teams by using the professional learning approaches in the table above right.

4. The team must be specific in terms of the practices it will

employ and actually employ them.

"The main thing is to keep the main thing the main thing"
(Covey, 2005, p. 160).

Ensure that the team stays focused on the school and district initiatives around learning and results. Although this may sound like common sense, it is often challenging for teams because of the many responsibilities and roles educators play.

Coaches can help team work stay focused by using a cycle of continuous improvement that begins with identifying what students and adults need to learn, clarifying what student and adult success looks like, determining multiple instructional pathways, and committing to bring student work back to the team for analysis and determination of next steps. Using this process includes the professional learning approaches outlined in the table on p. 59.

5. The team must be clear about the specific evidence it will collect to document growth, and it must collect and use the evidence to improve professional practices.

4 TYPES OF COACHING SUPPORT TO KEEP THE FOCUS AND ENSURE IMPLEMENTATION		5 TYPES OF COACHING SUPPORT TO DETERMINE EVIDENCE OF STUDENT LEARNING	
Role	Professional learning approach	Role	Professional learning approach
Coach as consultant	Ensure a cycle of improvement is used to align decisions about curriculum, assessment, and instruction with student learning goals.	Coach as consultant	Help teams develop common assessments (formative and summative) that focus on higher levels of achievement for all students and provide the team with a continuum of assessment strategies that promote student learning.
	Identify and reinforce the team's use of common language and concepts to guide their work.		Use a data analysis process to support learning from the data and identify ways to change instruction in response to student needs.
	Provide the team facilitator with examples of protocols and job-embedded learning strategies for making meaning of data.		Increase team members' assessment literacy so that they use data ethically to make decisions that support student growth such as how to differentiate instruction versus using data to label students.
Coach as collaborator	Set specific, data-informed, measurable goals and develop plans for implementation.	Coach as collaborator	Take an inquiry stance as a co-learner to determine which data sources provide the best information for instructional purposes.
	Assist the team facilitator in the development of a learning-focused agenda and prioritization of tasks and support the team as it defines individual/team responsibilities and timelines.		Co-create common formative and summative assessments and analyze results.
	Engage in brainstorming, co-planning, action research, inquiry processes and exchange of resources.		Engage in professional learning such as action research to study the impact of data-informed decisions on student learning.
Coach of reflective thinking	Mediate awareness of individual and shared values and develop the team's vision for continuous learning and improvement and shared responsibility for the work.	Coach of reflective thinking	Support the team in taking a meta-view of the big picture of learning.
	Engage the team in learning-focused conversations to generate insights about student needs and instructional practices.		Raise awareness about assumptions related to student data to ensure that data is being used ethically.
	Ask reflective questions about student data and related individual and team professional practices and help team members make their progress visible to each other.		Pose reflective questions that encourage team members to learn from each other by deprivatizing their practice and sharing their successes and challenges.

"The more you teach without finding out who understands the concepts and who doesn't, the greater the likelihood that only already-proficient students will succeed" (Wiggins, 2006).

Collaborative teams should use student data to celebrate success, acknowledge gaps in learning, and respond to learner needs. Committing to a close examination of teaching practices and the impact of those practices on student learning is an indicator that the team is embracing collective efficacy because it is taking responsibility for student learning.

Team members are aligning what they need to learn and

do as educators to meet the needs of their students. They are recognizing that as a team, they have a greater opportunity to impact student learning than they would have as individuals.

COACHES AS CATALYSTS OF CHANGE

Coaches can use the collective efficacy framework described here to ensure teams are focused on developing the five conditions needed for developing collective efficacy. They can use it to diagnose a team's needs and decide which type of coaching support to provide.

By focusing on teams, coaches are more likely to be catalysts for change at the school level. Too often, the work of coaches is focused only on building individual capacity. This can result in improved teaching and learning in individual classrooms but not in the school as a whole. Schools that develop collective efficacy are schools where all teachers and students can thrive and reach their potential.

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