

Creating an administrator-coach partnership

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Purpose	Use this tool to provide a structure and tools for the partnership agreement conversations between coach and the administration.	
Recommended time	1 hour plus preparation	
Materials	Tool 16.1 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Possible questions to explore • Sample Partnership Agreements, Tool 16.3, page 9 • Sample Confidentiality Agreements, Tool 16.4, page 14 • Coaching Roles, page 4 • Topics for Partnership Agreement List, pages 5–6 	
Steps	1. Before the beginning of each school year, instructional coaches and administrators — including both the principal and assistant principals — meet to discuss and write an explicit agreement.	As needed
	2. Principal or facilitator explains the purposes for a partnership conversation which include but are not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To establish agreements for the ongoing relationship between site administrators and instructional coaches. • To establish a plan for ongoing conversations to communicate and review expectations and impact for instructional coaches. • To align the instructional leadership work of both the administrator and the instructional coach to ensure cohesive support for teachers' professional growth. 	5 minutes
	3. At the beginning of the meeting, with all team members present, the principal or facilitator asks participants to draft and agree to norms for this and all future team meetings.	5 minutes
	4. Participants decide who will take notes during the meeting. The partnership agreement resulting from this conversation should be written and signed by all participants to ensure mutual understandings have been reached; therefore, it is important to take notes during the discussion, especially noting final agreements for each of the topics discussed.	5 minutes

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Steps	<p>5. Participants review the 10 roles in Coaching Roles and any other district documents that define the roles of coaches. They consider the following questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What 3–5 roles do you think coaches should play to ensure the most important work at your building is successful? • What will the greatest challenges likely be this year? • What strengths and/or successes can we leverage to assist with the challenges? • What are our agreements around confidentiality? <p>Hint: While the purpose of this phase of the conversation is to establish shared expectations for coaching activities and priorities, it is important to remember that coaching is most productive if administration communicates expected results and the exact methodology is left to the coaches. This allows each coach to develop his or her own style of coaching and to honor teacher voice and choice within personal coaching relationships.</p>	15 minutes
	<p>6. Each participant considers the questions listed on the Topics for Partnership Agreement List. While some of the questions may be more relevant than others, a brief consideration of each question is recommended in order to ensure mutual understanding. Established school or leadership teams might wish to have each team member review the questions prior to the meeting and identify his or her key concerns for discussion.</p>	15 minutes
	<p>7. After agreement has been reached on each of the topics of concern, participants make plans to create the written agreement. Who is responsible for putting it in agreement form? When and how will all parties review it and sign?</p>	5 minutes
	<p>8. Participants review the group norms drafted at the beginning of the meeting and revise as necessary in accordance with the new agreement.</p>	5 minutes
	<p>9. Participants set a schedule for future meetings and discuss what will happen when meetings need to be canceled. Will they be rescheduled or skipped? What will happen if one or more of the team are not in attendance at a scheduled meeting? Participants decide who will send calendar appointments.</p>	5 minutes

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Coaching roles

Role	Purpose	Example
Resource provider	To expand teachers' use of a variety of resources to improve instruction.	Gathers information and resources (e.g. articles, materials) for teachers.
Data coach	To ensure that student achievement data is used to drive decisions at the classroom and school level.	Works with individuals or groups to facilitate conversations around data-driven instructional decisions.
Instructional specialist	To align instruction with curriculum to meet the needs of all students.	Coaches teachers on methodologies and best practices that can be used to deliver content.
Curriculum specialist	To ensure implementation of the adopted curriculum.	Helps teachers unpack required curriculum.
Classroom supporter	To increase the quality and effectiveness of classroom instruction.	Visits teacher's classroom to model, co-teach, or observe; conducts pre- and post-visit conferences with teacher to facilitate reflection.
Learning facilitator	To design collaborative, job-embedded, standards-based professional learning.	Assists with coordinating and planning effective school-level professional development.
Mentor	To increase the novice teacher's instructional skills and to support schoolwide induction activities.	Works with novice teachers and at the schoolwide level.
School leader	To work collaboratively (with formal and informal leaders) to plan, implement, and assess school change initiatives to ensure alignment with and focus on intended results, and to monitor transfer or practice from professional development into action.	Participates as a learning walk team member to monitor transfer of knowledge into practice.
Catalyst for change	To create disequilibrium with the current state as an impetus to explore alternatives to current practice.	Challenges current practices and supports teachers as they make changes.
Learner	To constantly seek to become better at what he or she does.	Continually updates own professional repertoire.

Source: *Taking the Lead: New Roles for Teacher Leaders and School-Based Coaches* by Joellen Killion and Cindy Harrison. Copyright 2006 National Staff Development Council.

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Topics for partnership agreement list

What roles and responsibilities will the coaches be focusing on this year — specifically, what do we expect coaching will look like? For example:

- Are relationships already strongly built or will we allow time for relationship building before moving into coaching for impact?
- Which of the 10 roles will we prioritize for each subject or team? (Note: In establishing this priority, consider the number of new teachers on teams, the presence of new standards, or changes in curriculum.)

How will coaches engage with teachers and where will we focus our efforts?

- How will coaches be introduced to the teachers and how will their role be explained?
- Will coaches work with teams?
- Will they engage in one-on-one formal coaching cycles?
- What teams, or how many teachers, will we attempt to coach initially?
- What are the principals' instructional priorities?
- What are the content coordinator's primary concerns?
- Is there an expectation that teachers work with coaches and, if so, how will this be communicated to teachers? Will coaches need to "sell" their services to teachers?

When and how often will coaches have access to teachers or teacher teams?

- Which teachers have common conference periods?
- Are weekly planning meetings an expectation for teachers? And if so, is the coach's presence at those meetings required or is it at the discretion of the coach — or the teachers? Are teachers required to participate in team planning meetings? How will those expectations be communicated? Will calendar appointments be sent?
- Will planning days be given to teachers? How often? Will the dates be set by teachers or by the coach? Is the day for professional learning or planning, or both? Can a teacher refuse to attend?
- What access will coaches have to classrooms? Should coaches wait to be invited into a teacher's classroom or is the expectation that all classrooms are open to coaches? How will this expectation be communicated to teachers?

When and how will we exchange feedback, review progress, and timelines in order to reassess priorities?

- When will we begin to look for impact? If changes in priorities and our coaching work need to happen, when will we discuss them?
- How will we communicate changes in priorities and coaches' work to teachers?
- How are coaches expected to track or document their work? What information will be provided to administrators?
- How will coaches' work be communicated to teachers (e.g. a coaches' newsletter, a corner of the campus newsletter)?
- When we discuss progress, will we use teacher names or refer to specific teams? And if we do use names, how will we protect the integrity of the coaching relationship?

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What are the expectations for teachers' planning and data analysis? For each of these questions, also consider how these expectations will be communicated to teachers.

- Are teachers expected to use the backward design process in planning?
- Are teachers expected to create common assessments in district platforms (e.g. Aware, Blackboard, Schoology) and share them with the coach?
- Are teachers expected to share data from common assessments?
- Are teachers allowed to modify common assessments at their own discretion?
- What roles do the standards, the learning objectives, and the "I can" statement play in instruction?
- Who is responsible for gathering data for teachers? For administrators?
- Will the coaches review summative and benchmark data with the teachers or will an administrator? If the results are lower than expected, who will address this result with teachers initially?

Issues of confidentiality should specifically be addressed:

- How should a coach let an administrator know that he or she is uncomfortable answering the question asked by the administrator because of confidentiality issues?
- How should one party let the other party know that attention is needed in a specific classroom or team as soon as possible, and how will we ensure that confidentiality is protected?

Specific issues:

- How will teachers' complaints about the coach be handled?
- How and when will the team discuss the professional learning needs and schedule of coaches? What to expect in terms of days off campus vs. days on campus? Will coaches attend any off-campus professional learning with teachers?
- Is there budget money for coaches' personal professional learning needs (e.g. conferences, service centers, coursework)?
- Is budget available to coaches for professional learning (e.g. budget for professional learning they offer; budget to pay released time so teachers can access this professional learning; budget for coaches to access district PL on the campus)?

For coaches on two or more campuses:

- What is the work schedule between the campuses?
- Is there any room for flexibility regarding which campus a coach is on in relation to specific teacher needs?
- On campus-level professional learning days, how will we decide how the day will be spent? What are the administrative team's expectations?

Adapted from Sharron Helmke, Coordinator of Instructional Coaching, Clear Creek Independent School District,