The IC Toolkit

The IC Toolkit

Jim Knight

Jessica Wise

Michelle Harris

Amy Musante

A joint publication

CORWIN
A Sage Company

learningforward

CORWIN
A Sage Company

FOR INFORMATION

Corwin
A SAGE Company
2455 Teller Road
Thousand Oaks, California 91320
(800) 233-9936
www.corwin.com

SAGE Publications Ltd.
1 Oliver's Yard
55 City Road
London EC1Y 1SP
United Kingdom

SAGE Publications India Pvt. Ltd.
Unit No 323-333, Third Floor, F-Block
International Trade Tower Nehru Place
New Delhi 110 019
India

SAGE Publications Asia-Pacific Pte. Ltd.
18 Cross Street #10-10/11/12
China Square Central
Singapore 048423

Printed in the United States of America

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Knight, Jim, author. | Wise, Jessica, author. | Harris, Michelle (English teacher), author. | Musante, Amy, author.

Title: The IC toolkit / Jim Knight, Jessica Wise, Michelle Harris, Amy Musante.

Description: Thousand Oaks, California : Corwin, [2025] | Includes bibliographical references and index.

Identifiers: LCCN 2024033970 | ISBN 9781071971581 (spiral bound) | ISBN 9781071971604 (epub) | ISBN 9781071971611 (epub) | ISBN 9781071971635 (pdf)

Subjects: LCSH: Mentoring in education. | Teachers—In-service training. | Communication in education. | Effective teaching.

Classification: LCC LB1731.4 .K55 2025 | DDC 371.102—dc23/eng/20240730
LC record available at https://lccn.loc.gov/2024033970

This book is printed on acid-free paper.

Vice President and Editorial Director: Monica Eckman
Acquisitions Editor: Megan Bedell
Content Development Editor: Mia Rodriguez
Content Development Manager: Lucas Schleicher
Senior Editorial Assistant: Natalie Delpino
Production Editor: Tori Mirsadjadi
Copy Editor: Michelle Ponce
Typesetter: C&M Digitals (P) Ltd.
Proofreader: Lawrence W. Baker
Indexer: Integra
Cover Designer: Scott Van Atta
Marketing Manager: Melissa Duclos

24 25 26 27 28 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Contents

Note From the Publisher: The authors have provided video and web content throughout the book that is available to you through QR (quick response) codes. To read a QR code, you must have a smartphone or tablet with a camera. We recommend that you download a QR code reader app that is made specifically for your phone or tablet brand.

Foreword

It is with great joy and admiration that I introduce this remarkable work by Jim Knight and the team at the Instructional Coaching Group. Throughout my decades-long friendship with Jim and my own journey as a teacher, principal, and professional learning leader, I have come to appreciate the way Jim addresses how coaching ultimately leads to student success: describing practical strategies for coaches, sharing the evidence about how instructional coaching improves teaching, and calling on systems to create conditions to support effective coaching. Jim's books stand out as invaluable resources.

This latest book, *The IC Toolkit*, is no exception. This book explores Jim's Seven Success Factors that are essential for effective instructional coaching. Readers will appreciate how Jim—along with coauthors Jessica Wise, Michelle Harris, and Amy Musante—emphasizes the need for true partnerships between coaches and educators, alignment among the many roles involved in effective coaching, and supportive environments where systems, schools, coaches, teachers, and students all thrive. This book is a unique resource for the people who carry out essential work in our schools every day.

Jim's writings are not merely insightful; they serve as historical markers that capture and help clarify major moments in our educational journey. They take us through the foundations of modern-day instructional coaching, new learning evidence about how coaches can spend their time to have the greatest impact, and even illuminate critical junctures such as coaching through the COVID-19 pandemic. In each phase of the journey, Jim prompts us to reflect on our approaches to support student learning and well-being and consider how to make adaptations if we need to re-center the student.

As I reflect on the writings in Jim's new book, many of which have been featured in Learning Forward's *The Learning Professional*, I see the throughline of humanity and a recognition of the dignity of educators. I also see themes from Learning Forward's Standards for Professional Learning woven throughout the pages. The Standards serve as our profession's cornerstone for high-quality professional learning, describing the content, processes, and conditions that lead to effective, high-quality professional learning. The Leadership standard, for example, underscores the critical role leaders play in creating spaces and structures that ensure

coaches can learn and thrive as they develop skills to meet teachers' learning and instructional needs—a theme throughout Jim's writing.

We also see the three equity-focused Standards reflected throughout this book. These Standards encourage professional learning leaders to attend to the content (Equity Practices), the learning processes (Equity Drivers), and the systems and conditions (Equity Foundations) that lead to increased access to learning for both educators and students. These themes run throughout this book's discussion of how instructional coaching builds teachers' skills and capacity to create classrooms where the assets and experiences that every child brings to the classroom are recognized and celebrated.

By integrating equity, we create conditions for all students to have access to learning and invite educators to examine their own beliefs and biases as they work to understand our students, their families, and their communities so that we can pave the way for positive change. As coaches and teachers collaborate, it becomes crucial to navigate conversations with sensitivity to biases, ensuring that our educational practices remain inclusive and equitable.

Jim and I recently reflected on our long partnership and what the connection represents. In our conversation, it became clear that, like our respective organization's visions, we are here to do great work for children all over the world. Our collaboration represents a dedication to prioritizing students above all else. This goal of creating meaningful, rigorous, and engaging learning experiences for children is our collective responsibility as educators. The depth of this relationship has not only enriched our collective understanding of instructional coaching but also reinforced our commitment to modeling the partnership principles in every facet of our work. More than that, though, is our deep appreciation for each other. We see the impact of professional learning and instructional coaching. It is with great pleasure that we both get to play a part in the outcome of those efforts.

As you embark on the journey of this latest book, I hope you embrace the opportunity to reflect on the past, engage with the present challenges, and envision a future where instructional coaching continues to evolve and adapt to meet the needs of all learners. This book is a testament to how Jim and the Instructional Coaching Group have continuously seen educators as professionals. I commend Jim and his colleagues for their new work and find it hard to imagine where we would be as a field without their unwavering dedication to instructional coaching.

As you continue your professional development, I hope you find as much value in this book as I have. May this book inspire and empower you to champion the transformative power of coaching in creating brighter futures for our students.

With deep appreciation,

Frederick Brown

Acknowledgments

At the Instructional Coaching Group, we aim for excellent instruction, every day, in every class, for every student. To do that critical work, we recognize that effective professional development is necessary. The team at ICG works on six continents to facilitate learning for adults so that our world's students reap the benefits. While working with these distinguished educators, we often hear questions about how coaches can continue learning, how administrators can partner with coaches, and requests on how facilitators of coaching programs could lead meaningful learning opportunities using the research and work from Jim Knight and the Instructional Coaching Group. Because of the questions and the many partnerships that have fueled our work, we were inspired to compile a resource that might aid the support of implementation of coaching long after the training ends.

This book would not be possible without the gracious collaboration of several publications where many of these articles were first written. We would like to thank Anthony Rebora from ASCD and Educational Leadership, Suzanne Bouffard at Learning Forward (formerly the National Staff Development Council), Jennifer Dubin at Principal Leadership, and Deirdre Kinsella-Biss at Principal Connections. Thank you for partnering with us to share these articles with our audience.

As we compiled this book, we leaned on many learning partners who shared their thoughts, tested different components for us, and even contributed insight on how to make this as user friendly as possible. Those learning partners include Lauren Bernstein, Tricia Burbank, Leah Dowd, and Laurie Higgins from the Wilkins Coaching Team in Stoughton, MA; Coach Champions in Jefferson County schools in Alabama, and Instructional Coach Marquitis Adams in Gwinnett County Public Schools. Our wonderful teammates at ICG also poured into our ambitions endeavor and shared invaluable time with us. Thank you to Jennifer Hlavka, Christina Ortega, and Jamie Pitcavage for reading and rereading the various book elements we sent you. Thank you to everyone at the Instructional Coaching Group who supported the product we are so excited to share with the world. A special acknowledgement also goes out to our families. They loved us through many phone calls, late nights of collaboration and work, and time spent on this manuscript. Your support means everything.

Finally, thank you to the many instructional coaches, coaching teams, coaching champions, and administrators who will use this book to do incredibly important work. We are so grateful you have chosen to learn with us and encourage you to keep moving forward. We believe in you and are here for you in every page of this toolkit. As you implement these activities and explore the resources, just know that you have a little bit of us there with you.

About the Authors

Dr. Jim Knight, founder and senior partner of Instructional Coaching Group (ICG), is also a research associate at the University of Kansas Center for Research on Learning. He has spent more than two decades studying professional learning and instructional coaching. Jim earned his PhD in education from the University of Kansas and has won several university teaching, innovation, and service awards.

The pioneering work Jim and his colleagues have conducted has led to many innovations that are now central to professional development in schools. Jim wrote the first major article about instructional coaching for the *Journal of Staff Development*, and his book *Instructional Coaching* (2007) offered the first extended description of instructional coaching. Jim's book *Focus on Teaching* (2014) was the first extended description of how video should be used for professional learning. Recently, writing with Ann Hoffman, Michelle Harris, and Sharon Thomas, Jim introduced the idea of instructional playbooks with their book on that topic.

Jim has written several books in addition to those described previously, including *Unmistakable Impact* (2011), *High-Impact Instruction* (2013), *Better Conversations* (2015), *The Impact Cycle* (2018), and *The Definitive Guide to Instructional Coaching* (2021). Knight has also authored articles on instructional coaching and professional learning in publications such as *Educational Leadership*, *The Journal of Staff Development*, *Principal Leadership*, *The School Administrator*, and *Kappan*. Jim is also a columnist for *Educational Leadership*.

Through ICG, Knight conducts coaching workshops, hosts the Facebook Live Program "Coaching Conversations," and provides consulting for coaching programs around the world.

Dr. Jessica Wise is a virtual consultant with the Instructional Coaching Group. Beginning her career in education in 2007, Jessica has held various roles including a classroom teacher, school-based instructional coach and intervention/gifted teacher, district literacy specialist, and then leadership and staff development instructional coach. Jessica received her doctoral degree in school improvement from the University of West Georgia where her focus was facilitation of adult learning. When not working, Jessica enjoys hiking, movie night with her family, and reading. She lives in Georgia with her family.

Michelle Harris has been in education since 1993, starting as a special education para, then a teacher, coach, and administrator. She is the coauthor of *Instructional Playbook: The Missing Link for Translating Research Into Practice* and *Evaluating Instructional Coaching: People, Programs, and Partnership*. Michelle is a seasoned staff developer and has presented and keynoted in the United States, Canada, Africa, Asia, and Europe. She lives in Portland, Oregon, with her husband, two sons, a corgi, and two cats.

Amy Musante is a consultant with the Instructional Coaching Group. She began her journey in education in 1998 and has served in many roles to support students and diverse school communities. Her experience as a language arts teacher, secondary schools intervention specialist, and district director of coaching programming (UPK-12) has provided her with experience that informs her work continuously. She received her MA from Teachers College, Columbia University and has done considerable work partnering with the university postgraduation. In her free time, Amy loves spending time in nature, traveling with her family, and cheering on Buffalo sports teams.

Introduction

Excellence always comes at a price, and that price is practice. Whether we are watching a virtuoso violinist, eating a perfectly created meal, or cheering on our favorite athlete, the excellence we see, hear, or taste, is possible because someone practiced so that they could get better. Practice, focused on honing the art and craft of a profession, is just as important for instructional coaches as it is for master chefs or hockey players.

For more than twenty-five years, researchers and consultants at the Instructional Coaching Group (ICG) have been studying what excellence in coaching looks and sounds like. We've organized our findings around Seven Success Factors, and we've produced a number of books, articles, and workshops that help people learn about those factors. This book, however, is different. We have designed *The IC Toolkit* so that coaches can refine the art and craft of being an instructional coach. This book is packed with tools that coaches can use in a variety of ways to become highly proficient in the Seven Success Factors.

We designed this book so that over the thirty-six weeks of an academic school year, coaches, either individually or preferably collectively, can practice, reflect, and learn. If you're a coach who wants to improve or a leader who wants to set up meaningful learning activities for coaches, this book will give you tools that you can use every week.

In their book *The Knowing-Doing Gap* (2000) Robert Sutton and Jeffrey Pfeffer wrote that "one of the main barriers to turning knowledge into action is the tendency to treat talking about something as equivalent to actually doing something about it" (p. 29). Certainly, there is value in reflecting on and exploring the Seven Success Factors, and there are many articles in this text that can function as thinking prompts for meaningful dialogue. However, there are also many other tools that coaches can use to practice and improve so they can bridge the knowing-doing gap. And when coaches becoming highly proficient in the art and craft of coaching, good things will happen for educators and, most importantly, students.

What Is Included in This Book?

This book has an introduction, seven chapters, and a conclusion. The seven chapters represent the Seven Success Factors from Jim Knight's research. The following are the Seven Success Factors:

1. The Partnership Principles
2. Communication Skills
3. Coaches as Leaders
4. The Impact Cycle
5. Data
6. The Instructional Playbook
7. System Support

What Is Included in Each Chapter?

- One-page description of the Success Factor
- A table that lists all resources in the chapter
- Learning Paths
- End-of-chapter reflection questions

What Are Learning Paths?

Learning paths are our ideas on how to use the provided resources to explore each Success Factor in a meaningful way. Each Learning Path begins with a guiding question to focus your learning. Then, you will find the names of the resources that align with that path.

RESOURCES	
Articles written by Jim	
Activities to use as you read the articles	
Case studies or scenarios that allow you to apply your learning	
Checklists for coaching skills	
Videos from the Instructional Coaching Group's video collection	

To guide and support you through the Learning Paths, we have also included steps to use to engage in each Learning Path's activity.

How Do I Use This Book?

We wrote the book with *you* in mind. Our mission was to provide a toolkit made for learning, collaboration, discussion, and growth, all focused on the work of Jim Knight and The Instructional Coaching Group. If you are curious about how you might interact with these resources, we invite you to explore the following three scenarios. While this is not an exhaustive list of how you might learn with us, we hope the scenarios ignite ideas for how to proceed. Happy learning!

The Coach Champion

Christina is a Coach Champion, a facilitator of professional development who aims to build instructional coaches and support them as they coach within schools. Each month, Christina meets with a group of instructional coaches to facilitate their

(Continued)

(Continued)

learning and conversation about instructional coaching. The coaches go back to their schools and implement their learning, then continue to return to the monthly sessions with Christina to learn, reflect, and practice their coaching. Christina intentionally uses *The IC Toolkit* to choose learning paths for her coaches that align with their monthly topics. For example, at the start of the school year, Christina used Chapter 1, The Partnership Principles, to discuss the foundational beliefs we hold as coaches. After moving through that chapter, she realized that the coaches were still new to the Impact Cycle. Therefore, in the next few gatherings, Christina used Learning Paths from Chapter 4, The Impact Cycle, to enrich the coaches' understanding of the process of coaching. The Learning Paths provide Christina with articles for her coaches to read, videos to show her coaches, and activities she can facilitate as the coaches interact with the learning path resources. Christina writes down the date next to each learning path, so that she can see what she has used and where she might need to go next.

The Instructional Coaches

Jamie and four other coaches within his cluster of schools are all implementing the Impact Cycle with their teachers. Since coaching is new to their district, they try to keep in touch and help each other as they implement what they have learned about instructional coaching. Once every month, they meet on Zoom or in one of their schools to learn together, but they were not sure exactly *what* to learn about or even how. When Jamie discovered *The IC Toolkit*, he realized that the group of coaches could pick Learning Paths about topics they were working on with teachers and learn together as a group. The coaches take turns leading Learning Paths each time they meet, allowing the group to learn together with all the resources already planned for them.

The Solo Coach

Jenn recently moved out of the classroom to serve her school as an instructional coach. She has heard of coaching before and knows that there are some coaches in her district, but she does not know who they are. Jenn's principal recommended *The IC Toolkit* to her to invest in her own professional development as she adjusts to her role as a coach. Each week, Jenn designates one to two hours in her calendar for professional development. During that time, she looks through the Seven Success Factors, Chapters 1 through 7, and decides which factor she would like to explore during her learning time. Once she chooses a chapter, she uses the Learning Paths to experience self-guided and sacred time to learn and invest in her coaching skills. Jenn leverages the margins of the pages to annotate her articles and the reflection

questions to jot her new learning. As a bonus, she is using the activities provided in each chapter as activities she can use when she eventually begins leading professional development at her school. The Learning Paths allow her to learn on her own and give her ideas about how to facilitate learning for others, too.

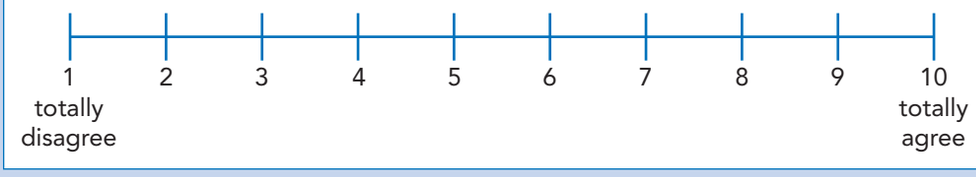
One More Tool

In the following section is a needs assessment survey you may choose to use along with this book. To maximize your learning experience in *The IC Toolkit*, you might choose to take this survey as a way to gauge where you, your coaching program, or your system is in the journey toward coaching proficiency with the Seven Success Factors. For example, you can take this survey, then see in which areas you have the lowest scores. That could inform you or your team where to begin in the book. A team might score high in the Partnership Principles, but they might score lower in the use of data. This team might choose to begin in Chapter 5: Data, so that they could target their specific area of need. We hope you find this tool helpful as you self-assess or reflect on the current needs of your coaching program.

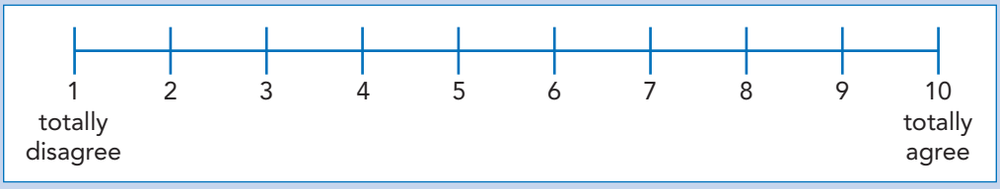
Needs Assessment

Rank each success factor on a scale of 1 to 10 (1 = totally disagree; 10 = totally agree).

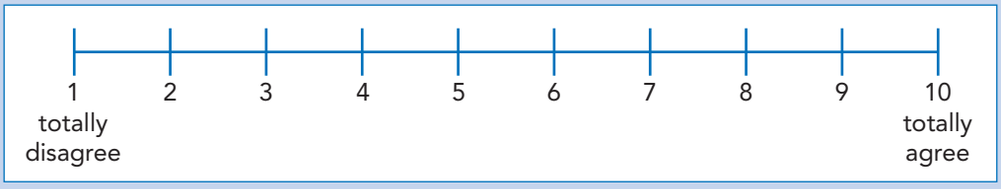
1. Partnership Principles
   - I believe my collaborating teachers' ideas, beliefs, opinions, and knowledge are just as important as mine.
   - I am 100 percent okay with teachers selecting goals that are different than the ones I would choose for them.
   - My collaborating teachers know that I think their voices are just as important as mine.
   - I willingly share my ideas when they are helpful, but I also refrain from trying to talk my collaborating teacher into adopting those views.
   - My coaching leads to deep implementation and sustained changes by collaborating teachers.
   - I expect to learn from each teacher I partner with, regardless of how much experience they do or do not have.



2. Coaching Skills/Communication
   - I do not ask leading questions.
   - I have a list of effective questions and use the questions differently depending on the progress of the coaching conversation.
   - I prepare myself for coaching conversations by considering which questions I might ask during the coaching session.
   - My questions effectively invite teachers to think more deeply about their situation.
   - During the identify and improve stages of the Impact Cycle, my collaborating teacher talks at least 80 percent of the time.
   - I stay focused on what my collaborating teacher says during coaching.
   - I don't interrupt (except when necessary) during coaching conversations.
   - My eye contact and nonverbal communication demonstrate to my collaborating teachers that I am listening to them.

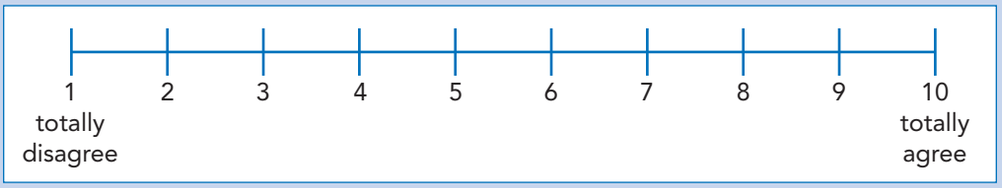


3. Leadership
   - I can clearly describe my purpose.
   - I manage my time so that I can focus on actions that help me achieve my purpose.
   - I take care of myself and treat myself with the same compassion I would show to a good friend.
   - People can count on me to do what I said I would do.
   - I interact with collaborating teachers in ways that amplify their intelligence, capabilities, and efficacy.
   - I balance personal ambition with humility, focusing on the greater good rather than on self-interest.

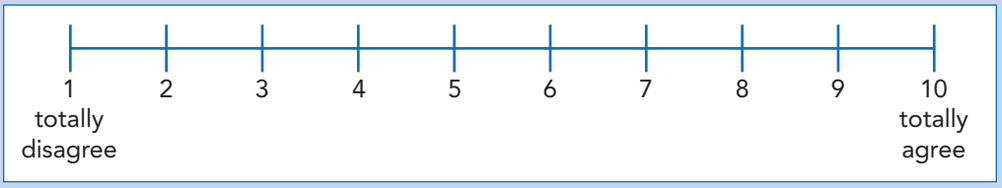


4. Impact Cycle
   - I partner with teachers
     - to ensure they get a clear picture of reality before they set a goal,
     - to set PEERS goals,

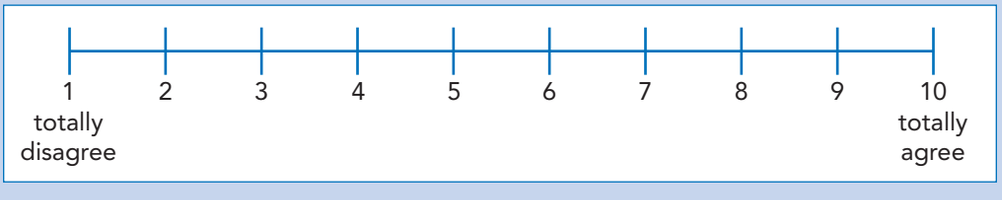
- to identify teaching strategies teachers can try to meet their goals,
- to explain and model strategies so they can implement the strategies with confidence, and
- to make adaptations until goals are met.



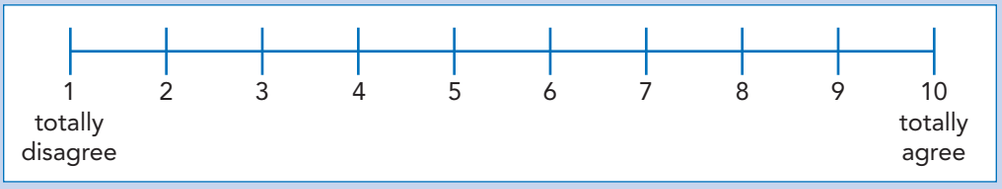
5. Data
   - I fully understand the difference between behavioral, cognitive, and emotional engagement.
   - I can gather valid, objective, reliable data for assessing behavioral, cognitive, and emotional engagement.
   - I fully understand the difference between content, procedural, and conceptual levels of knowledge.
   - I fully understand the difference between measuring the acquisition, connection, and transfer kinds of learning.
   - I can apply a variety of assessment tools (selected response, brief constructed responses, checks for understanding, rubrics, and others) to ensure that the right level and kind of learning is validly and reliably being assessed.



6. Teaching Strategies
   - I know the top fifteen highest-impact strategies teachers can use to hit goals in our district.
   - My organization has created an instructional playbook that I use frequently to identify and explain strategies teachers can use to hit their goals.
   - I confidently, clearly, and dialogically explain teaching strategies.



7. System Support
    - My principal clearly understands my role as a coach and communicates regularly with stakeholders regarding my role.
    - I spend at least 70 percent of my time partnering with teachers on the Impact Cycle.
    - Our district has clearly identified the standards we use to assess coaches and the coaching program.
    - I am evaluated by someone who has a deep understanding of instructional coaching.
    - I am evaluated by a tool created for instructional coaches.
    - We have a clear policy or agreement on confidentiality.
    - All administrators in our district understand what instructional coaches do.
    - All administrators understand the Partnership Principles at the heart of instructional coaching.
    - I understand what I am to do and not do in my role as a coach.



Needs Assessment Survey

Interested in completing the needs assessment online? You can use the following link:

https://qrs.ly/42g4p6q

An Example of How to Use a Learning Path

Sample Learning Path

Guiding Question: What are the Seven Success Factors?

Resources: *Teach to Win* article, The Chunk and Chew 10-2-2 activity

Activity:

1. Read through the Chunk and Chew 10-2-2 activity to become familiar with the process.
2. Engage in reading the *Teach to Win* article.

3. Use the Chunk and Chew 10-2-2 activity to discuss and share your thinking about the text.
4. Wrap up this Learning Path by answering the reflection questions that follow the article.

Teach to Win

Originally published in *Principal Leadership, 15*(7), 24–27. March 2015.

Seven Success Factors for Instructional Coaching Programs

Over the past decade, my colleagues and I at the Instructional Coaching Group and the Kansas Coaching Group at the University of Kansas Center for Research on Learning have collaborated with more than 20,000 instructional coaches from all continents except Antarctica. We've learned from our partnerships and research studies that instructional coaches will have a socially significant impact on how teachers teach and students learn when their coaching programs are built around Seven Success Factors. We have also learned that coaches will struggle to have a positive impact on teachers and students when their coaching programs fail to address even one of the success factors. In order to have an impact, coaches in successful instructional coaching programs should

1. Understand the complexities of working with adults
2. Use an effective coaching cycle
3. Know effective teaching practices
4. Gather data
5. Employ effective communication strategies
6. Be effective leaders
7. Be supported by their schools and districts

Working With Adults

Coaches can know a lot about teaching, but if they don't understand the complexities of working with adults, they might prompt others to resist what they're offering. As I've written in *Unmistakable Impact: A Partnership Approach to Dramatically Improving Instruction* (Knight, 2011a), helping adults is more complex than simply giving expert advice. Professionals want to make decisions for themselves and be recognized with the status they feel they deserve. They take it personally when others criticize their personal work, and they are motivated to reach their goals only when they see them as personally relevant.

For these reasons, coaches should position themselves as partners by respecting teachers' professional autonomy, seeing teachers as equals, offering many choices, giving teachers voice, taking a dialogical approach to interactions, encouraging reflection and real-life application, and seeing coaching as a reciprocal learning opportunity (Knight, 2011b).

The Partnership Principles

1. Equality
2. Choice
3. Voice
4. Dialogue
5. Reflection
6. Praxis
7. Reciprocity

Coaching Cycle

If teachers are to be positioned as professionals, they need to have a lot of autonomy, but coaching must also be accountable. Within coaching, we see accountability as both coaches and teachers getting a clear picture of reality, setting powerful, student-focused goals, and then collaborating until those goals are met. Effective coaching is more than a few conversations; effective coaching leads to socially significant improvements in teaching and learning. Indeed, if student learning is not improving, instructional coaching isn't working.

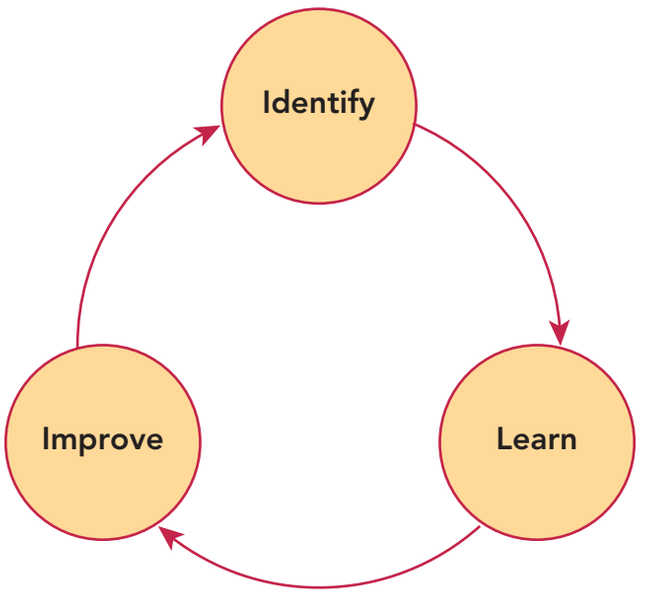
For the past six years, my colleagues and I at the Kansas Coaching Project at the University of Kansas Center for Research on Learning have used design research to study and refine an instructional coaching cycle that honors teacher autonomy and is accountable (Knight et al., in press). Working with coaches in Beaverton, Oregon, and Othello, Washington, we developed and tested an instructional coaching cycle that incorporates three stages: identify, learn, and improve.

During the **identify** stage of the instructional coaching cycle, the coach and teacher get a clear picture of the current reality in the collaborating teacher's classroom, often by recording a video of a class (Knight, 2014), looking at student work, reviewing assessment data, or some combination of these methods. The coach then guides the teacher to a student-focused goal. Usually student-focused goals deal with student achievement (e.g., for 90 percent of students to score five

out of five on a paragraph-writing rubric three times in a row), behavior (e.g., for students to be on-task an average of 95 percent of the time), or attitude (e.g., for 90 percent of students to read for pleasure as measured by students' journal comments). Once a goal has been set, the teacher and coach identify a teaching strategy to be implemented in an attempt to hit the goal.

During the **learn** stage of the instructional coaching cycle, the teacher learns the teaching strategy with the help of the coach. Often, instructional coaches describe teaching practices through the use of checklist, and then suggest various ways the teacher can see the practice in action. For example, a coach might model the practice in the teacher's classroom, the teacher might visit another teacher's classroom where the strategy is being used, or the teacher might watch a video or see the practice in some other way. Once the teacher has learned the practice, it's time to try it out.

During the **improve** stage of the instructional coaching cycle, the teacher tries the new strategy in the classroom. Often the coach video records the lesson and gathers data on students' progress toward the goal. The teacher and coach can make adjustments as necessary, sometimes even choosing another teaching strategy, until the goal is met.



Teaching Practices

Instructional coaches help teachers improve student learning by improving teaching, so instructional coaches need a deep knowledge of a set of strategies that they know will help teachers hit their goals. We refer to this as the "instructional playbook." Strategies included in one's instructional playbook can be

found in my book *High-Impact Instruction* (2013), Marzano's (2007) *Art and Science of Teaching*, John Saphire et al.'s (2008) *The Skillful Teacher*, or other publications focused on particular teaching strategies. What counts, though, is that the strategies described in the instructional playbook have all been proven to help teachers meet their goals.

An instructional playbook usually includes a one-page document that lists the teaching strategies teachers most frequently use and checklists that describe the various elements of each instructional strategy.

Thus, for example, a coach's instructional playbook that includes cooperative learning might contain a checklist that describes some general guidelines for implementing cooperative learning, another that describes a specific cooperative learning structure such as the jigsaw classroom technique, and a third that describes what students should do when they are participating in the learning structure.

An effective instructional playbook is (a) comprehensive and addresses planning, assessment, instruction, and community building; (b) focused, including a small number of powerful strategies (ideally described on a single page); and (c) precise, containing a complete set of checklists for all of the included teaching strategies.

Gather Data

Coaches guide teachers to set and achieve goals, so it is essential that they know how to gather basic observational data so that it can be used to set goals and monitor progress. Not all goals require observation. For example, if a teacher has set an achievement goal based on results on formative assessment, they may just need to review the assessments. However, goals do frequently involve coaches observing a class, gathering data, and sharing the data with teachers.

Some of the most important data that coaches can gather include on-task time (i.e., the percentage of students who are doing the learning task that the teacher has assigned); instructional versus noninstructional time; the type, kind, and level of question asked; and the ratio of interaction (i.e., a comparison of how often teachers attend to students when they are on task and learning compared with how often teachers attend to students who are off-task or disruptive).

Communication Skills

Coaching is relational, and coaches need to know how to build healthy relationships. Teachers rarely learn from collaborating coaches unless they see them as people they can trust.

Since teaching is so connected to personal identity, coaches need to be especially adept at a few critical communication issues. Good communicators know that speaking the truth is only half the battle; the challenge is to speak the truth in such a way that it can be heard. We have found that coaches are more effective when

they have particular communication skills and habits. Effective coaches usually are good listeners, ask good questions, build emotional connections, find common ground, build trust, and redirect destructive interactions.

Leadership Skills

In addition to communication skills, coaches need to have leadership skills. While leadership certainly involves communication, we have found that the coaches who lead change successfully have two additional attributes. First, they must be deeply respectful and responsive to the teachers with whom they collaborate, adjusting their approach depending on the personality and needs of the teachers and their students.

Second, they must be assertive and disciplined, leading change in an organized, ambitious, forceful manner. Both are necessary.

Coaches who are responsive to teachers but undisciplined will waste teachers' time and often lose sight of the end goal before the coaching cycle is complete. Coaches who are ambitious and disciplined but unresponsive often push teachers away. The most effective coaches, as Jim Collins found when he studied effective leaders in great organizations, "are a study in duality: modest and wilful, humble and fearless" (Collins, 2001, p. 22).

System Support

Instructional coaches who make an impact work in districts that create the conditions that help them be effective. In part, this means that there is district-wide agreement about the coaches' roles (which often means that coaching is understood as a nonadministrative role), what information is and is not confidential, a shared understanding of how coaches will relate to teachers (we suggest the partnership approach), and agreement on how coaches will use their time.

Principals play an incredibly important role in shaping the success or failure of coaches. The most effective principals are instructional leaders who understand the positive impact professional learning can have on student learning. Principals who support coaches walk the walk by leading professional development sessions and agreeing to be coached themselves, perhaps by video recording model lessons and being coached during a staff meeting. Most importantly, principals who support coaches understand the power of coaching and communicate that frequently. If a principal does not speak out about the value of coaching, something needs to be changed, or a coach will struggle to succeed.

When it comes to instructional coaching, little changes can have a big impact. Teaching expectations, using rubrics, increasing positive attention, and using checks for understanding are just a few of the ways teachers working with coaches can dramatically increase student learning. When teachers learn, students learn. Such powerful positive changes won't happen, though, if coaching programs are thrown together carelessly. Effective coaching programs provide professional

development, ensuring that the Seven Success Factors described here are in place. When those factors are addressed, truly positive improvements can happen quickly and frequently.

Reflection Questions for "Teach to Win"

1. On a scale of 1 to 10 (1 being at the very beginning and 10 being far along), where are you on your journey to implementing these success factors into your coaching program?
2. What is a new discovery you made about how to ensure success with coaching programs?
3. How important is it that everyone (teachers, coaches, leaders) understands these success factors?
4. What is your next action after exploring the success factors?

NOTES

CHUNK AND CHEW 10-2-2 ACTIVITY

Purpose: To engage in reading, reflection, and discussion about a text in small chunks

Process:

1. Select a text of focus for a group to read and discuss together.
2. Establish a timekeeper for the group.
3. Before beginning, gather copies of the text and something to record thinking on for each person (a journal, paper, etc.).
4. The timekeeper will set a 10-minute timer (time can be adjusted to 5 minutes if need be), and each person will begin independently reading the text.
5. When the 10-minute timer goes off, the group will spend 2 minutes independently recording their thinking about what they have just read.
6. At the conclusion of the 2 minutes of independent reflection, the group will turn in and spend 2 minutes (time can be adjusted for bigger groups) discussing what they have read so far and their ideas about that material so far.
7. The group will continue this process of 10-2-2 minute sections until the text has been read in its entirety.

Modifications:

- Adjust the 10 minutes of independent reading time if the group has a short time for the protocol.
- Adjust the 2 minutes of independent reflection if the group wishes to have more time to write or reflect on what they have read.
- Adjust the 2 minutes of group discussion if the group is larger or if the group decides 2 minutes is not long enough to share their thoughts. If the group has a longer chunk of time to gather for this protocol, the recommendation is to extend the group discussion to 4 minutes, making the protocol 10-2-4.

How Might Christina Use This Learning Path?

As a Coach Champion, Christina sees the benefit of using this Learning Path with all the instructional coaches she supports. She reads through The Making Meaning activity, gets familiar with the process, and then ensures that she has read the article ahead of time. Then, when her coaches arrive for their monthly professional development, Christina shares the guiding question and all the coaches turn to the article in their copy of *The IC Toolkit*. As the coaches read, they are marking up the text and making brief notes about what they notice. When the timer goes off, Christina calls them back together and facilitates The Making Meaning activity, moving through the steps that include describing the text, asking questions about the text, speculating about the text, and discussing the implications for the coaches' work. Christina facilitates a meaningful discussion with her coaches, inviting them to turn in and talk through each part of The Making Meaning activity to encourage dialogue. As Christina closes out the Learning Path, she invites all the coaches to look at the reflection questions that follow the article. During this moment of individual reflection, the room full of instructional coaches silently answer the questions and consider what they will do next after learning about the success factors.

How Might Jamie Use This Learning Path?

Jamie and his colleagues meet on Zoom for their two-hour monthly learning and discussion. After coaching all week and continuing to build their school's instructional coaching program, they are left wondering what more they can do. Since it was Jamie's turn to choose a Learning Path for the group to use in their gathering, he shares that he has selected a path that will help them see what other factors they can consider taking back to their schools and even share with their respective principals. Jamie and his coach colleagues read the article together, silently reading their own copies and muting their Zoom microphones while they read. Jamie's timer goes off for them to unmute and come back together, and he moves them through the steps of The Making Meaning activity. With each step of the activity, Jamie turns to his coach group and invites them to share. Everyone engages, sharing what they read, asking each other questions, and discussing how this is significant for their schools. After moving through the activity, Jamie shares that they will use the reflection questions to wrap up their discussion. His group prefers to think out loud, so he asks the reflection questions that appear after the article one at a time, and the group shares their ideas together.

How Might Jenn Use This Learning Path?

Jenn is excited that it is time for her Tuesday learning time. She heads back to her classroom after working with a teacher and settles down with her copy of *The IC Toolkit*. Jenn and her principal have been talking a lot about how to continue building their school's coaching program, so Jenn is on a mission to explore how to make that happen. She discovers this Learning Path about the success factors for coaching programs and decides this is exactly what she is looking for today. She notices that the activity has multiple steps to it, so she begins by reading the article and making notes as she goes. Then, she guides herself through the stages of The Making Meaning activity, individually reflecting on what she read, the questions she would like to take back to her principal for discussion, the significance of the success factors, and the implications for her work. As she reflects, she is also gathering ideas for her next meeting with her principal. To wrap up the Learning Path, she uses the lined space in her book to reflect on the article and activity, making the most out of her time to invest in her professional growth. She gathers her notes and emails her principal to schedule their next meeting so she can share what she is left thinking. Jenn also tucks The Making Meaning activity away in her mind: She thinks this would be a great activity to use with teachers in future professional development sessions!

One Last Note

Which scenario most closely fits your context? Use this sample learning path to begin your learning with us, dive into the Seven Success Factors, and practice using *The IC Toolkit*.

Additionally, these are suggestions on how to use Learning Paths. While we have provided you with optional ways to learn, we also encourage you to make this book work for you. Thank you for committing to learn and grow, and for making an unmistakably positive impact on the world around you. Enjoy!

Chapter 1

The Partnership Principles

"I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel."

—Dr. Maya Angelou

Success Factor #1: The Partnership Principles

Coaches who invest in their foundational knowledge, beliefs, and approaches to coaching are thinking deeply about **Success Factor #1: The Partnership Principles**. This idea of partnership comes first in the list of Success Factors intentionally. It represents the underlying theory and beliefs coaches have and carry with them into each coaching interaction, serving as a point of reference that guides our actions when partnering with teachers (Knight, 2007, 2022). The seven principles are equality, choice, voice, reflection, dialogue, praxis, and reciprocity. Coaches who actively show up as partners and live by these principles can increase coaching success (Knight, 2022).

So Why Should We Be Talking About The Partnership Principles Within Schools and Systems?

The principles are our "theoretical framework," serving as a lens through which we can view each person and interaction as we coach (Knight, 2022, p. 20). They offer instructional coaches a chance to have a shared vocabulary from which to discuss how they go about coaching teachers (Knight, 2007). When schools and systems explore these principles, they are prioritizing a fundamental element to their coaching from which healthy and productive conversations can flourish.

Resources Included in This Chapter

ARTICLES	ACTIVITIES	SCENARIO	VIDEOS
"Seven Principles for True Partnership" "Why Teacher Autonomy Is Central to Coaching Success" "Five Habits of Humility" "Dialogue & Trust" "When Times Are Tough, Show Compassion"	Text Scramble Storytelling In Closing Video Reflection: The Partnership Principles	Praxis Scenario	The Partnership Principles: 1. Equality 2. Choice 3. Voice 4. Dialogue 5. Reflection 6. Praxis 7. Reciprocity The Principles of Coaching: 1. Moralistic Judgment

Optional Learning Paths

Learning Path #1

Guiding Question: What are the principles that guide my coaching?

Resources: "Seven Principles for True Partnership" article, Text Scramble activity, The Partnership Principles YouTube videos

Activity:

1. Use the Text Scramble activity to read about and watch videos on The Partnership Principles.
    a. Each scramble group can be assigned one Partnership Principle to explore using the article and the video. For example, one person or group might read about equality and watch the equality video.
2. Wrap up the learning by using the reflection questions that appear after the article.

Learning Path #2

Guiding Question: What role should choice and teacher autonomy play in instructional coaching?

Resources: "Why Teacher Autonomy Is Central to Coaching Success" article, Chunk & Chew activity

Activity:

1. Use the Chunk & Chew activity to read the article "Why Teacher Autonomy Is Central to Coaching Success."
2. Wrap up the learning by using the reflection questions that appear after the article.

Learning Path #3

Guiding Question: How can humility contribute to the Partnership Principle of reciprocity?

Resources: "Five Habits of Humility" article, Storytelling activity

Activity:

1. Read through the Storytelling activity to become familiar with the process.
2. Read the article "Five Habits of Humility," and then use the Storytelling activity to discuss humility and reciprocity.
3. Wrap up the learning by using the reflection questions that appear after the article.

Learning Path #4

Guiding Question: What are the components of the Partnership Principle of dialogue?

Resources: "Dialogue & Trust" article, In Closing activity

Activity:

1. Read through the In Closing activity to become familiar with the process.
2. Read the article and then participate in the In Closing activity to share what stood out about the elements of dialogue.
3. Wrap up the learning by using the reflection questions that appear after the article.

Learning Path #5

Guiding Question: How can the equality Partnership Principle help us avoid moralistic judgment when working with teachers?

Resources: "When Times Are Tough, Show Compassion" article, Principle of Coaching video: Moralistic Judgment

Activity:

1. Watch the video about moralistic judgment. After the video, discuss or think about how this might align with the Partnership Principle of equality.
2. Then, engage in reading about compassion with the article.
3. Wrap up the learning by using the reflection questions that appear after the article.

Learning Path #6

Guiding Question: What role does the Partnership Principle of praxis play in coaching?

Resources: Praxis scenarios

Activity:

1. Use the Praxis scenarios to learn, discuss, and reflect.
2. Wrap up the learning by discussing how praxis will play a role in your coaching.

Learning Path #7

Guiding Question: How can I reflect on *my* use of the Partnership Principles?

Resources: Video Reflection: Partnership Principles

Activity:

1. Use the Partnership Principles Video activity to reflect on your practice.
2. Wrap up the learning path by discussing how video can continue to inform your coaching.

Learning Path #1 Resources

What Are the Principles That Guide My Coaching?

Guiding Question: What are the principles that guide my coaching?

Resources: "Seven Principles for True Partnership" article, Text Scramble activity, The Partnership Principles YouTube videos

Activity:

1. Use the Text Scramble activity to read about and watch videos on The Partnership Principles.
    a. Each scramble group can be assigned one Partnership Principle to explore using the article and the video. For example, one person or group might read about equality and watch the equality video.
2. Wrap up the learning by using the reflection questions that appear after the article.

The Partnership Principles

1. Equality
2. Choice
3. Voice
4. Dialogue
5. Reflection
6. Praxis
7. Reciprocity

Seven Principles for True Partnership

For deep professional learning, create the conditions for dialogue.

Originally published in *Educational Leadership, 80*(1). August 29, 2022.

When I started out as a professional developer, I wasn't very good. My biggest problem wasn't my large folder of overheads or my limited presentation skills, it was the way I approached my audience. I assumed teachers would see how compelling the research was that I presented and then simply do what I told them they should do. When they didn't embrace my ideas, I labeled them as resistant.

During my presentations, however, I couldn't shake my suspicion that I was the problem, not the teachers. To better understand why my workshops were failing, I read authors from a wide variety of fields—and I changed my approach to PD. Eventually I completely flipped my approach. Instead of telling teachers what they should do, I saw myself as a facilitator creating the conditions for dialogue. Instead of seeing myself as an expert, I saw myself as a partner.

I have summarized what I've learned about partnership in seven principles: equality, choice, voice, dialogue, reflection, praxis, and reciprocity. I've found that when I ground presentations in these principles, as opposed to a directive approach, teachers are more likely to be engaged, to learn, to enjoy learning, and to implement what they are learning.

Translating the Principles Into Practice . . .

Those partnership principles are now a central part of the professional development my colleagues and I deliver and describe to educators. But we are finding that knowledge of the partnership principles doesn't inevitably translate into action. Most troubling for me, personally, is that even I fail to act consistently with the principles. Seeing the gap between what I believe and what I do has led me to think more deeply about what it means to truly approach others from the partnership perspective. To help me, and others, translate the partnership principles into action, I have developed questions anyone can ask themselves so that they can move closer to living out these principles.

. . . And Questions That Help

Equality: "Do I interrupt or moralistically judge others?" When we embrace the principle of equality, we recognize the value and dignity of others. One small but important way we live out this principle during conversation is that we let others speak without interrupting them. Speakers usually interrupt to take control, to put themselves in a superior position; interrupting is a power move. If I see others as equals, I need to let them speak.

When we moralistically judge others, we aren't just discerning a clear picture of reality (as we see it), we are implying or stating that others are bad people—"lazy," "selfish," "clueless," and so on. Moralistically judging others violates the principle of equality since judgment, by definition, comes from a place of superiority.

Choice: "Can I let go of control?" Let's stop talking about "buy-in." A partnership conversation is not one where I try to get you to do what I have decided you need to do. A partnership conversation is a free interchange between equals where each person's ideas, thoughts, and beliefs are valued, and where both partners have the courage to be shaped by each other.

Voice: "Do others know I think their opinions are important?" When we act on the principle of voice, others know that they have been heard. Internally, we need to focus on what others say, listening without assumptions. Externally, we need to put away our devices and communicate nonverbally, make eye contact, have an open stance, not complete someone's sentences, and so on, so that others

know they have been heard. Honoring the principle of voice means respectfully communicating that we think their ideas are important.

Dialogue: "Do I see others' strengths? Do I want what's best for them and am I open to being shaped by them?" The best writing I've read about creating the conditions for dialogue is in Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Dialogue, Freire writes, requires humility, faith, and love. By humility, he means that we open ourselves to others' opinions and let go of the need to be right. By faith, he means that we see others' strengths and competencies. By love, he means that we have others' best interests at heart. When these three conditions exist, trust will follow, and trust is necessary for any meaningful partnership.

Reflection: "Do I avoid giving advice?" Generating ideas and solving problems are very pleasurable experiences. Many of us love to do all that thinking, even if we're doing it for other people. We often find it a real struggle not to jump in and tell others exactly what we know is best for them. Unfortunately, when we gift others with our wisdom, we take away their opportunity to solve their own problems, thereby violating their opportunity to think for themselves.

Praxis: "Does our professional development allow sufficient time for necessary adaptations?" The term *praxis*, as I use it, describes learning experiences that involve real-life applications of learning. Professional development grounded in the principle of praxis is designed so that a learner learns new knowledge through applying that knowledge. Real learning happens in real life.

Reciprocity: "Do I want and expect to learn from others?" One of the rewards of the partnership approach is the chance to learn from others. However, to learn from others, we need, first, to believe that others have something to teach us and, second, to embrace the chance to learn from them. In some ways reciprocity is the quintessential partnership principle. When we open ourselves to others, our world gets bigger, and somehow, because we're open to learning, we often have more influence on others as well.

One More Question

In aiming for partnership relationships, we need to ask ourselves, "Am I treating myself like a partner?" We likely won't snap our fingers and completely change the way we interact with others. I haven't—and I've been writing about partnership for decades. The partnership principles provide a vision for interaction; and day to day, reflecting on our beliefs and actions, we will move closer to that vision. But we shouldn't feel devastated when we struggle as a partner. Treat yourself with self-compassion, the way you would treat a friend. If we are going to treat others as partners, we should do the same to ourselves.

The Partnership Principles

Equality: I don't believe any person or group is more valuable than any other. I recognize and honor the dignity of every individual.

Choice: I communicate in a way that acknowledges the professional discretion of others by positioning them as decision makers.

Voice: I want to hear what others have to say, and I communicate that clearly.

Dialogue: I believe conversations should consist of a back-and-forth exchange, with all parties hearing and responding to one another's opinions.

Reflection: I engage in conversations that look back, look at, and look ahead.

Praxis: I structure learning so that it's grounded in real life.

Reciprocity: I enter each conversation open and expecting to learn.

Reflection Questions for "Seven Principles for True Partnership"

1. How can the Partnership Principles shift the way we lead, coach, or facilitate?
2. Which Partnership Principle challenges you the most? Why?
3. Which Partnership Principle is your school/system already implementing/demonstrating? What does this look like in practice?
4. What might need to change in your school/system?

NOTES

Partnership Principles Videos

https://youtu.be/W4ThA4eSUIU
In this video, Jim talks about the principle of equality.

https://youtu.be/TDV3OGiaS3I
Listen in to the power of yes or no, also known as choice, in this video.

https://youtu.be/NQKwt0DWA1c
Jim describes the third principle, Voice.

https://youtu.be/BDRCrQuTAMg
In this video, Jim discusses how to turn contact into connection with dialogue.

https://youtu.be/mZyAGZdGw_8
Listen to Jim describe the importance of reflection.

https://youtu.be/vU5ds3vDYig
Jim explains that we should call off the fidelity police and focus more on praxis.

https://youtu.be/g8IUpSpINO0
In the final principle, Jim shares how reciprocity is the radical learner's approach to reform.

To read a QR code, you must have a smartphone or tablet with a camera. We recommend that you download a QR code reader app that is made specifically for your phone or tablet brand.

TEXT SCRAMBLE ACTIVITY

Purpose: To discuss a text with a group of people in a meaningful way.

Process:

1. Select a text of focus for a group to read and discuss together.
2. Establish a timekeeper for the group.
3. Before beginning, divide the text into smaller sections. This can be done by grouping paragraphs together or by using subtitles.
4. Have all participants choose a section of the text to read, ensuring that each section of the text has been distributed. If there are more people than there are sections, it is okay for two people to read the same section.
5. Set a timer, and give everyone time to read their section. Encourage them to look for the following things as they read (this can even be a way to take notes as participants read):
    a. What's this section about?
    b. What am I left thinking after reading this?
    c. What would I want to share about this section with others?
    d. What is the bottom line?
6. After everyone has had time to read and jot notes, bring the group back together and go through the text, making space for each person to share about the section(s) they read.
    a. You can modify this protocol for big groups by putting people into smaller groups to do this work and then bringing everyone back together at the end to share their overall thoughts.
7. Once the group has shared their thoughts on each section of the text, offer a few minutes for participants to silently reflect or write about their final thoughts.

Learning Path #2 Resources

What Role Should Choice and Teacher Autonomy Play in Instructional Coaching?

Guiding Question: What role should choice and teacher autonomy play in instructional coaching?

Resources: "Why Teacher Autonomy Is Central to Coaching Success" article, Chunk & Chew activity

Activity:

1. Use the Chunk & Chew activity to read the article "Why Teacher Autonomy Is Central to Coaching Success."
2. Wrap up the learning by using the reflection questions that appear after the article.

Why Teacher Autonomy Is Central to Coaching Success

To foster improvement and responsible accountability, instructional coaches must honor teachers' choices and discretion.

Originally published in *Educational Leadership, 77*(3). November 1, 2019.

Instructional coaches often feel intense pressure to promote change. Like most everyone else in education, coaches want students to succeed, and they frequently measure their success by whether they drive changes that improve students' learning and well-being. This pressure to move the needle can lead coaches and administrators to take a directive approach to coaching—telling teachers what they've done right and wrong and what they must do to improve. But in fact, as research has shown and as I've found in my own work on coaching, this is not the way to help teachers flourish.

Indeed, after studying coaching for more than 20 years, I have concluded that recognizing and honoring teacher autonomy is an essential and fundamental part of effective coaching.

What Teacher Autonomy Isn't

Before discussing why autonomy is essential, it is important to recognize what autonomy is not. In any organization, there are non-negotiables that must be adhered to—rare is the school where a teacher can say "I'm not much of a morning person; I think I'll start teaching at noon." And choosing to be unprofessional in conduct should not be a choice available to anyone involved in educating our children. No one in a school is free to bully students, be a toxic force on teams, or decide that they no longer need to improve. Fortunately, such unprofessional behavior is rare, but when it exists, it needs to be dealt with directly by administrators. Refraining from upholding professional standards of acceptable teaching is not a matter of honoring autonomy.

But genuine autonomy is a key aspect of coaching work, one that can be complex and challenging for coaches to manage. Indeed, when coaches and leaders recognize the importance of autonomy, they may need to rethink many traditional elements of professional development, including accountability, feedback, and fidelity.

Fostering Self-Determination

An ever-increasing body of research shows that professionals are rarely motivated when they have little autonomy. Researchers have illuminated why autonomy is essential for motivation and why exclusively top-down approaches to change are almost always guaranteed to fail (Amabile et al., 1996; Deci & Ryan, 2000; Pink, 2009; Seligman, 2012).

Edward Deci and Richard Ryan (2000) synthesized their decades of research on motivation into what they referred to as Self-Determination Theory. They proposed that people have three innate human needs—competence, autonomy, and relatedness—that will increase motivation when met and decrease motivation when not met. That is, people will feel motivated when they (a) are competent at what they do, (b) have a large measure of control over their lives, and (c) are engaged in positive relationships. The opposite is also true: When people are controlled and told what to do, aren't in situations where they can increase their competence, and aren't experiencing positive relationships, their motivation will decrease, and they will be "crushed" (p. 68). Research in education has firmly established that this dynamic applies to teachers (Sparks & Malkus, 2015).

Despite evidence of the importance of autonomy, however, research suggests that autonomy is decreasing in schools. One survey-based study found that teachers' perceptions of their autonomy decreased significantly from 2003 to 2012 (Sparks & Malkus, 2015). Close to one in four teachers reported they had no control or only minor control over the books they used, the content they taught, teaching techniques, student evaluation, student discipline, or the amount of homework they gave students.

Coaches must work to change this dynamic. If we want engaged and motivated teachers, we need to ensure that they have significant choices about what they do, including having the right to say no to particular proposals. Choices are the way we define our own humanity—who we are—so stripping away people's right to choose is dehumanizing (Block, 1993).

When professionals are told what to do and given no choice, the best possible outcome is likely compliance—and compliance is not enough to do the complex work needed in our schools. As Daniel Pink (2009) writes in *Drive: The Surprising Truth About What Motivates Us*:

> Living a satisfying life requires more than simply meeting the demands of those in control. Yet in our offices and classrooms, we have way too much compliance and way too little engagement. The former might get you through the day, but only the latter will get you through the night. (p. 112)

Responsible Accountability

One obstacle to honoring teachers' autonomy, in my view, is that school leaders and policymakers often misunderstand the role of accountability. Usually, the term is used to describe how educators are obligated to do something for some external reason. It's common, for example, to hear that teachers' professional learning must be driven by adherence to a mandated instructional program or initiative. Or that teachers must be told what to work on based on school or district priorities.

I refer to such understandings of accountability as irresponsible accountability. This kind of accountability places all the responsibility for decision making outside the teacher. Such an approach is bound to fail. People are rarely motivated by others' goals, and a one-size-fits-all model of change rarely provides helpful solutions for the individual complexities of each unique classroom.

Recently, at a coaching workshop I conducted in Kansas, an instructional coach from Texas painted a vivid picture of what irresponsible accountability can look like in schools. She told us about an interaction that took place when her principal went to talk with a teacher about her students' low test scores. When the principal raised the issue, the teacher pointed out that she was implementing the program the district had told her to implement. "I did everything I was told to do, and I did it with fidelity," she said. "If my students aren't doing well, I'm not the problem—it's your program."

Responsible accountability is different. When educators are responsibly accountable, their professional learning is driven by what they have determined will have an impact on their students' learning. In this way, they are accountable to the improvement process—and to students, parents, other stakeholders, and the profession of teaching. Responsible accountability entails a genuine individual commitment to learning and growth.

An Example of Responsible Accountability

Instructional coaching, done well, should foster responsible accountability. During coaching, teachers should have a great deal of autonomy even though they are learning with a coach. For instance, a coach using the Impact Cycle (Knight, 2018), with stages for identifying, learning, and improving, might video record a lesson and provide the teacher with some suggestions to better interpret what the video reveals.

Following this, the coach and teacher usually have a coaching conversation to identify a goal that the teacher really cares about and that will have an unmistakably positive impact on student learning or well-being. Once a goal is set, they identify a teaching strategy the teacher will implement in an attempt to hit the goal.

During the learning stage, the coach and teacher collaborate to prepare the teacher to implement the new strategy effectively. This often involves the coach explaining the strategy and the teacher modifying it to better meet her students' needs. Often the teacher watches the coach, another teacher, or a video to better understand the strategy before implementing it. Finally, during the improving stage, the teacher, in partnership with the coach, makes adaptations until the goal is met.

Let's look at how this might play out for an individual teacher. Imagine a teacher who views a video recording of her lesson and sees that only 5 of her 31 students responded to the questions she asked. In conversation with her coach, she might decide to set a goal of increasing the number of students responding to questions during each lesson to 20. Once she has set the goal, she and the coach can discuss various strategies she might use to meet it. For example, she might try thinking prompts, effective questions, or a cooperative-learning approach such as think, pair, share (Knight, 2013). She or the coach could videotape her lessons to monitor her progress. As long as she remains committed to her goal, she can keep partnering with the coach to identify strategies or refine what she is implementing until she hits her goal.

This is professional learning that is undeniably accountable—measurable changes will occur that will mean real improvements for students. However, this type of professional learning also involves a high degree of autonomy: The teacher, with support from the coach, observes her own lesson, sets her own goal, adapts the teaching strategies she implements, monitors progress, and determines when she has hit the goal.

The Complexity of Teaching

School leaders and coaches must also understand that teaching is not something that can be boiled down to a set of prescriptive steps. Its complexity requires independent decision making and self-directed growth.

In a groundbreaking study published in 2002, researchers Sholom Glouberman and Brenda Zimmerman broke down the complexity levels of different work tasks. They identified three different types of tasks: simple, complicated, and complex. A simple task, like baking a cake, involves a set of steps that will produce the same results each time when the steps are followed. A complicated task, Glouberman and Zimmerman argued, like putting a person on the moon, involves much more intricate work, but it still involves formulas and steps that should produce predictable outcomes. A complex task, like raising a 3-year old, cannot be broken down into a set of steps because every day and every child is different.

Leadership experts Alexander Grashow, Ronald Heifetz, and Marty Linsky (2009) have described the kinds of challenges presented by simple and complicated tasks as technical challenges. Such challenges "have known solutions that can be implemented by current know-how. They can be resolved through the application of authoritative expertise" (p. 19). By contrast, the kinds of challenges presented by complex tasks are adaptive challenges: "Adaptive challenges can only be addressed through changes in people's priorities, beliefs, habits, and loyalties. Making progress requires going beyond any authoritative expertise to mobilize discovery, shedding certain entrenched ways, tolerating losses, and generating new ideas to thrive anew" (p. 19).

If raising one child is complex, then educating and inspiring a room full of children must be considered dauntingly complex, and certainly anyone who has taught recognizes how many variables are at play in the classroom. Much of teaching, in

other words, requires adaptability, meaning that discretion and personal discovery are essential to success, and that one-size-fits-all solutions or external dictates will only hamstring progress.

To be sure, technical solutions are appropriate for simple and complicated classroom tasks like organizing a seating chart or teaching some basic procedures. But much of teaching is complex work, and technical solutions will not suffice. Indeed, Heifetz, Grashow, and Linsky (2009) write that "the most common failure in leadership is produced by treating adaptive challenges as if they were technical problems" (p. 19).

Feedback as Dialogue

When people describe what coaches do, one of the chief tasks they identify is giving feedback. However, as Buckingham and Goodall (2019) recently argued in the *Harvard Business Review*, many people's understanding of feedback is completely backwards. For many of us, feedback "is about telling people what we think of their performance and how they should do it better." But, as Buckingham and Goodall explain, "The research is clear: Telling people what we think of their performance doesn't help them thrive and excel, and telling people how we think they should improve actually *hinders* learning."

Buckingham and Goodall (2009) identify three fundamental flaws in the prevailing understanding of how to provide feedback. First, we are not very good at rating others' performance. Our evaluations of other people, they maintain, have more to do with ourselves than with those we are observing. Second, simply telling others how they fall short actually inhibits, rather than encourages, learning. Buckingham and Goodall present compelling research showing that hearing criticism shifts people into survival mode, thereby "impairing" learning. "Learning," the authors write, "rests on our grasp of what we're doing well, not on what we're doing poorly, and certainly not on someone else's sense of what we're doing poorly." And third, excellence isn't reducible to universal and simple explanations. As Buckingham and Goodall explain:

> Since excellence is idiosyncratic and cannot be learned by studying failure, we can never help another person succeed by holding her performance up against a prefabricated model of excellence, giving her feedback on where she misses the model, and telling her to plug the gaps.

What does this mean in connection with instructional coaching? First, the lesson (again) is that honoring the autonomy of teachers in coaching is essential if feedback is to lead to improved practice. Rather than telling teachers what they like and dislike about a lesson, coaches should structure conversations with teachers as dialogues between two equal partners, where both members of the conversation are heard and where both parties' opinions count.

Second, as education authors like William Sommers, Parker Palmer, and Robert Garmston have pointed out, effective dialogue is often enabled through a third point for conversation that takes the focus off the coach and teacher and directs it toward whatever the two are exploring together. This increases the teacher's role in the

feedback process. Two powerful "third points" are student work and video recordings of teachers' lessons.

Third, coaching conversations are more effective when they are nonjudgmental. This doesn't mean that coaches shouldn't share what they think; instead, they should share their thoughts provisionally and with the humility appropriate for any conversation about what happens in a classroom.

Questions of Fidelity

A final argument often given for top-down professional learning is that effective teaching practices must be implemented with fidelity, so coaches need to ensure that teachers are proceeding as prescribed. This point of view is easy to justify in theory. If teachers don't teach evidence-based practices with fidelity, the thinking is, they won't get results. Therefore, coaches need to make sure teachers implement teaching practices the way research says they were meant to be implemented.

Unfortunately, too narrow a focus on fidelity can actually stand in the way of quality instruction. Without question, instructional coaches need to partner with teachers to provide the supports that empower teachers to implement new practices in ways that get results. But it's the results that matter, not the fidelity to process. By results I mean positive changes in student learning and well-being. Fidelity of implementation doesn't mean much if there aren't positive changes for students.

One of the problems with fidelity is that asking teachers to implement exactly what a script says, exactly as the script says, treats teachers like workers on an assembly line rather than professionals. An overemphasis on fidelity could lead to teachers doing every move on a checklist but teaching without passion or engagement, or even teaching in ways that fail to promote student learning.

A second, more important issue is that teaching is too complex to conform to a one-size-fits-all model. A fidelity approach embodies the idea that solutions to instructional challenges are technical—when, in reality, they must be adaptive.

To be sure, instructional coaches need to be deeply versed in the practices they share, and they should be highly skilled at finding precise, easy-to-understand explanations for those practices. However, they need to present information in a way that allows the teacher to do the thinking. When explaining a teaching practice, an effective instructional coach might say, "Here's what the research says. However, do we need to adapt this at all so it will work for you and your students? What do you think about this approach?" When, for the sake of fidelity, coaches tell teachers what to do without honoring their thoughts and opinions, they are crushing motivation and inviting resistance.

Finally, coaching should be a goal-directed process, as opposed to an exercise in micromanagement. Only an effectively executed practice will lead to positive results for students. So rather than telling teachers exactly what to do, instructional coaches should engage teachers in reflective conversations about what they think might work in their classrooms. By treating teachers like professionals, instructional coaches have a much better chance of enabling high-quality teaching and better student learning—and isn't that the whole point?

Real Choices

When school leaders and coaches dismiss the importance of teacher autonomy, they usually do so because they are so concerned about students' needs that they just can't feel at ease giving up control. But as we've seen, a rigid emphasis on accountability and control ultimately hampers teacher development. External mandates and top-down coaching typically fail—because ultimately they are disempowering and dehumanizing and fail to address the complexity of the classroom. A better option is to infuse coaching with autonomy. When teachers have real choices, when they are engaged in coaching that is responsibly accountable, then real student growth is possible.

Reflection Questions for "Why Teacher Autonomy Is Central to Coaching Success"

1. Can you think of a time in your school or district when a "directive approach" to coaching or professional development (PD) had a counterproductive effect on teachers?
2. If so, how could the training have been done differently?
3. Can you describe examples of "responsible accountability" in your school? What conditions helped create them?
4. What could you change in your coaching or supervision to better honor teachers' autonomy? How comfortable are you about making that change?

NOTES

CHUNK AND CHEW ACTIVITY

Purpose: To engage in reading, reflection, and discussion about a larger text in small chunks.

Process:

1. Select a text of focus for a group to read and discuss together.
2. Establish a timekeeper for the group.
3. Before beginning, gather copies of the text and something to record thinking on for each person (a journal, paper, etc.).
4. The timekeeper will set a 10-minute timer (time can be adjusted to 5 minutes if need be), and each person will begin independently reading the text.
5. When the 10-minute timer goes off, the group will spend 2 minutes independently recording their thinking about what they have just read.
6. At the conclusion of the 2 minutes of independent reflection, the group will turn in and spend 2 minutes (time can be adjusted for bigger groups) discussing what they have read so far and their ideas about that material so far.
7. The group will continue this process of 10-2-2 minute sections until the text has been read in its entirety.

Modifications:

- Adjust the 10 minutes of independent reading time if the group has a short time for the protocol.
- Adjust the 2 minutes of independent reflection if the group wishes to have more time to write or reflect on what they have read.
- Adjust the 2 minutes of group discussion if the group is larger or if the group decides 2 minutes is not long enough to share their thoughts. If the group has a longer chunk of time to gather for this protocol, the recommendation is to extend the group discussion to 4 minutes, making the protocol 10-2-4.

Learning Path #3 Resources

How Can Humility Contribute to the Partnership Principle of Reciprocity?

Guiding Question: How can humility contribute to the Partnership Principle of reciprocity?

Resources: "Five Habits of Humility" article, Storytelling activity

Activity:

1. Read through the Storytelling activity to become familiar with the process.
2. Read the article "Five Habits of Humility," and then use the Storytelling activity to discuss humility and reciprocity.
3. Wrap up the learning by using the reflection questions that appear after the article.

Five Habits of Humility

These practices can help coaches achieve the humility they need.

Originally published *in Educational Leadership, 81*(3). November 1, 2023.

"If we learn to open our hearts, anyone, including the people who drive us crazy, can be our teacher."—Buddhist author and teacher Pema Chödrön

When John Dickson (2011), author of the book *Humilitas*, told a friend he was planning to write about humility, his friend responded snarkily, "Well, John, at least you have the objective distance from the subject!" (p. 12). I feel my friends could make that same comment about me. I'm especially interested in the topic because I recognize a need to foster more humility in myself.

Humility, though, isn't just a personal growth area for me. I want to learn about humility because I have seen ample evidence that it's important in learning, especially in leading and coaching. When I ask coaches and administrators in my workshops to describe leaders who positively shaped their lives, humility is the trait that's always mentioned. Most experts in leadership, positive psychology, self-help, and religion also identify humility as essential. To lead, to persuade, to be a good person, to live a true and beautiful life, they say, we must be humble.

What Is Humility Anyway?

Humility is tricky to define. When I asked people on Twitter to define it, I got a variety of helpful responses. Respondents said humility is putting others ahead of ourselves, listening before talking, caring, and recognizing how small we are within the awesome grandeur of the cosmos. Some defined humility as being a partner, not a controller, or as having the courage to change our views based on what we learn from others. As one respondent, @tech_and_tacos, wrote on Twitter, "Humility involves putting aside pride, position, and ego to connect with others and assist them

in reaching their desired goals." Humility is also risky; when we put others' interests ahead of our own, sometimes our interests get overlooked.

We can gain a better understanding of the power of humility when we consider the alternative: arrogance. When we move through the world arrogantly, our pride and self-interest interfere with our ability to learn—after all, if we're sure we're right, what can we learn from others? Arrogance damages relationships and limits our ability to influence people. As John Dickson (2011) noted in *Humilitas*, "It is a simple observational reality that the humble are frequently more persuasive and inspiring than the arrogant" (p. 135).

Understanding what humility is not is just as important as understanding what it is. Humility is not being a doormat. People will be less effective advocates for others if they fail to advocate for themselves. Humility isn't a lack of confidence. Even a humble coach, for example, should be confident about the coaching cycle they're leading and open to learning from their collaborating teacher. Humility also doesn't mean we have low self-efficacy. Consider this quote often attributed to C. S. Lewis: "Humility isn't thinking less of yourself, it is thinking of yourself less."

Yes, We Can Learn Humility

I'm convinced that humility is a learned skill, not just something we're born with (or without). Certainly, our genetic inheritance and environment shape who we are. But the following five "humble habits" should move us down the humble path at least a little.

1. **Listen first.** Letting our partners speak first is a way of demonstrating humility. When we authentically listen, we quiet our minds and prioritize what the other person is saying so we can understand their needs and emotions. When we listen first, we learn what others know before we start sharing what we know. Humble listening isn't a simple technique; it's a way of interacting that communicates that we genuinely value what the other person has to say.
2. **See the good in others.** My working assumption about life is that everyone has goodness in them if you dig deep enough. We can foster our humility by looking for that goodness in others and letting them know we see it. This isn't always easy. Our brains are wired to see the negative first, so we need to be intentional about looking for the good in others. And we need to accept others' imperfections. When we let go of the need to judge and adopt a desire to appreciate, we move closer to being humble.
3. **Be ready to admit you're wrong.** We aren't being humble if we feel we always need to be right. We also aren't learning as much as we could if we're unable to admit when we're wrong. To be a little humbler, we should actively encourage others to help us see our errors, asking questions like, "If someone were to criticize this idea, what would they say?" or "What can you see here that I am missing?"
4. **Get a clear picture of reality.** One of the surest ways to become humbler is to see reality from different perspectives. Having a clear picture of reality gives us perspective on how we fit into the big and complex aspects of life. It can help us be more grateful and more aware of the limits of our own ideas. Usually,

reality will teach us that our suggestions aren't as helpful as we think they are, and people don't want our ideas as much as we think they do. This is why I believe that video is like steroids for learning. Coaches can video record their conversations to see, as my friend Christian van Nieuwerburgh likes to say, "what it feels like to be on the other side of me."

5. **Speak humbly.** If we want to be humbler, we must consider what message our words are communicating. When we say "my school" or "my teachers," for example, we may unintentionally communicate that we have power over others or even that we "own" the teachers. A humbler way of talking is to speak about "our school" or "our community." Additionally, humble communicators often offer ideas provisionally ("Let me just put this on the table for us to discuss" or "You know more about your students than I do") to allow room for others' views. And when people share ideas in a humble way, they often end up being more influential.

Moving Closer

These five habits are only a few ways of practicing humility. What matters most is that we avoid action or ways of communicating that suggest that we think I'm better than this person. We may never achieve purely humble intentions; our actions are always a complex mixture of concern for others and ourselves. But we can move closer to being humbler.

And one other thing to remember: When we think we really are very humble—we probably aren't.

Author's note: Many of the ideas in this column grew out of a conversation I had with my humble friend, Christian van Nieuwerburgh.

Reflection Questions for "Five Habits of Humility"

1. How does humility connect to the Partnership Principle of reciprocity?
2. What are nonexamples of humility? Why do we need to know this, too?
3. What is the most important way we can learn humility?
4. How can humility show up in our coaching?

NOTES

STORYTELLING ACTIVITY

Purpose: To make meaning by engaging in storytelling with a group on a given topic.

Process:

1. Select a text of focus for a group to read and discuss together.
2. Establish a timekeeper for the group.
3. Give everyone 5 to 10 minutes to read the selected text individually.
4. After reading, share that each person will use the ideas from the text to generate a story that they can call to mind based on an idea from the text, the topic of the text, or anything else that it brings up for them.
5. Give everyone 2 to 3 minutes to come up with (and possibly write down) their story.
6. Decide how stories will be shared:
    a. In pairs
    b. Whole group
    c. In small groups
7. Be sure to establish agreements for how the group will be during each story. For example, will everyone sit quietly? Will people ask questions? Will the speaker stand or sit? Ensure psychological safety is in place, so each person feels ready to share their stories, if they want to.

Modifications:

– Adjust the timing to fit the text and group size.

Storytelling can also be done before reading a text to share what people are already thinking about a topic and then built upon after reading to see what might have changed after engaging in the reading.

Learning Path #4 Resources

What Are the Components of the Partnership Principle of Dialogue?

Guiding Question: What are the components of the Partnership Principle of dialogue?

Resources: "Dialogue & Trust" article, In Closing activity

Activity:

1. Read through the In Closing activity to become familiar with the process.
2. Read the article, and then participate in the In Closing activity to share what stood out about the elements of dialogue.
3. Wrap up the learning by using the reflection questions that appear after the article.

Dialogue & Trust

Originally published in *Principal Connections, 23*(3). Summer 2020.

When I was an undergraduate student at Wilfrid Laurier University, I stumbled into a philosophy of education course taught by Dr. Robert Litke, which ultimately changed my life. I left the course very interested in education and deeply affected by Paulo Freire's (2017) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Freire's book challenged me then, and it still does today. I find the book to be wise, provocative and humanizing, and, among many other things, it offers a concise summary of some of the necessary conditions for dialogue, and ultimately trust to flourish. Dialogue, Freire says, requires love, humility, and faith.

Love

"Love," Freire (2017) writes," is . . . an act of courage, not of fear . . . [a] commitment to other people" (p. 78). Dialogue, Freire writes, "cannot exist . . . in the absence of a profound love for the world and for [people]" (p. 77). This sounds wonderful, but what does Freire mean by the word love?

Margaret Atwood has famously written, "The Eskimos have 52 words for snow because it is so special to them; there ought to be as many for love." Apparently, Atwood may be wrong about the number of words for snow in the Inuktitut, but she is right that we need many different definitions for love. Few words in English have been more trivialized than that word, and too often it seems like a vague empty term. However, thanks to writers such as Freire, I have come to see love in very specific ways. My definition is shaped by my reading of Dallas Willard, a former philosophy professor at University of Southern California. Willard defined love as "engaging your will for the good of another," genuinely wanting what is best for those around us, or truly having an attitude of benevolence for others. Simply put, when two people engage their wills for the good of each other, the opportunity for dialogue presents itself, and the foundation for trust is put in place. For this reason, love is a necessary prerequisite for dialogue.

The opposite is also true. If we go into a conversation using dialogue as a method to get buy-in, or to manipulate someone into buying what we are selling, a strategy, idea or advice, we aren't going to have a dialogue. The heart of a dialogue is each conversation partner's mutual desire for what is best for each other, or simply put, love.

Humility

"Dialogue," Freire (2017) writes, "cannot exist without humility" (p. 78). Since dialogue is a back and forth form of conversation, we need to go into the conversation, open to, perhaps even expecting to, change our opinions if we want to engage in dialogue. People who are sure they are right, and who aren't interested in learning from others, won't experience dialogue.

To be humble doesn't mean we choose to have low self-efficacy, or worse that we pretend to have low self-efficacy. We can, and should, believe in our ideas and be open to learning, and willing to be wrong. When we approach others with a desire to hear what they have to say, rather than with a desire to put them in their place, then we are moving toward a more dialogical way of being.

Faith

"Faith in [people]," Freire (2017) writes, "is an a priori requirement for dialogue; the dialogical [person] believes in other [people] even before he meets them face to face" (p. 79). Simply put, if we are going to have dialogue with someone else, we need to believe in them. If we dismiss people as having nothing to teach us, then dialogue is pretty much impossible. What does it mean to believe in other people? It means we believe they can and want to do good. It means that we believe they can teach us something. We approach them as learners not as judgers, expecting that they can and will teach us something.

One way to understand what it means to believe in people is to consider thinking about what it looks like when we don't believe in others. This lack of belief can show up in many different behaviors. First off, if we see a conversation as a one-way kind of conversation, where our goal is to give advice, to tell people what they've done right and wrong, to tell people what their next steps should be, we won't experience dialogue. A school where the professional development is designed to tell teachers what to do is often a school where teachers eventually stop thinking for themselves and tell the coach, "Just tell me what to do, and I'll do it."

Trust

When we approach others with love, faith and humility, trust should be the natural outcome. Freire (2017) writes, "it would be a contradiction in terms if dialogue—loving, humble and full of faith—did not produce this climate of mutual trust" (p. 80). Trust is established by dialogue, but it will be diminished or destroyed if love, faith and humility are not there. "False love, false humility, and feeble faith in [people] cannot inspire trust" (p. 80).

I have found Freire's (2017) simple descriptions of the conditions for dialogue and trust to be very helpful. If we sense people are hesitating to trust us, for example, we can reflect on whether we truly are engaging our wills for their good, communicating

that we believe in them, and approaching them with humility. When our words and actions embody love, faith and humility, others will trust us, and when trust occurs, we may find ourselves swept up in important, life-changing conversations.

Reflection Questions for "Dialogue & Trust"

1. How can we practice the concept of love in coaching?
2. What might humble conversations look, sound, or feel like?
3. How can we communicate or demonstrate faith in our conversation partners?
4. What impact would it have on trust if humility, faith, or love was missing?

NOTES

IN CLOSING ACTIVITY

Purpose: to share final thoughts about a text and to build on those ideas by hearing diverse perspectives.

Process:

1. Select a text for this protocol, and have all participants read the text.
2. Once everyone is done reading, give them time to go back through the text and find three big ideas that resonated with them.
3. On a piece of paper or sticky note, have participants write those three big ideas down.
4. Then, invite participants to reread all three of the big ideas and come up with one sentence that captures the essence of those big ideas. In other words, summarize what stood out to them the most with one sentence.
5. Once everyone has their summary sentence, the rounds begin. Here are the three steps for each round:
    a. To begin, one person (the speaker) will read aloud their summary sentence.
    b. Then, the rest of the group will take turns sharing what that person's summary sentence means to them by building on their ideas.
    c. Once anyone who is interested has shared their ideas about the speaker's summary sentence, it is the speaker's turn again. At this time, the speaker will say, "In closing . . . " and share the final thought they have after hearing from the group.
6. The rounds continue for each person in the group to share their summary sentence and follow the three steps listed in the previous step.
    a. This can be modified for large groups by creating smaller groups to ensure efficient use of time and increased voice equity.

Learning Path #5 Resources

How Can the Equality Partnership Principle Help Us Avoid Moralistic Judgment When Working With Teachers?

Guiding Question: How can the equality Partnership Principle help us avoid moralistic judgment when working with teachers?

Resources: "When Times Are Tough, Show Compassion" article, Principle of Coaching video: Moralistic Judgment

Activity:

1. Watch the video about moralistic judgment. After the video, discuss or think about how this might align with the Partnership Principle of equality.
2. Then, engage in reading about compassion with the article.
3. Wrap up the learning by using the reflection questions that appear after the article.

When Times Are Tough, Show Compassion

Originally published in *The Learning Professional: The Learning Forward Journal, 42*(6). December 2021.

The twin hardships of COVID-19 and political polarization are wearing down even the most resilient among us. Unfortunately, at a time when people really need us to show compassion, some of us are finding it harder and harder to be compassionate.

Compassion, as Sara Schairer (2019) has explained, is different from both sympathy and empathy. "Sympathy," Schairer writes, "means you can understand what the person is feeling," whereas empathy means "you feel what a person is feeling." Finally, compassion means that you are "willing to relieve the suffering of another." In short,

- Sympathy = understanding.
- Empathy = understanding + feeling.
- Compassion = understanding + feeling + action.

As I've reflected on Schairer's definitions and my own attempts to be more compassionate during these challenging times, I've come up with two things I can do to try to be more compassionate.

Choose Affirmation Over Moralistic Judgment

One thing that can interfere with the ability to be compassionate is moralistic judgment. As Margaret Wheatley (2009) has written, "It's not our differences that divide us. It's our judgment about each other that do" (p. 47). When we moralistically judge others, we move beyond simply looking at reality and add negative thoughts

or words about others' character or competence. Moralistic judgment, at its core, means expressing contempt ("I can't believe they talk, teach, parent, or simply act like that!"). Not surprisingly, it is difficult to feel contempt and be compassionate at the same time.

The opposite of moralistic judgment is affirmation, noticing the good in others as opposed to noticing the bad. When we affirm others, we see their strengths and, at the same time, hold up a mirror for them so they can also see their strengths. I can start to be less judgmental by considering what I truly believe: Do I want to separate myself from others (as being judgmental always does), or do I want to connect with others? If I believe in our common humanity, I want to connect with others and, therefore, need to try my best to affirm rather than moralistically judge others.

Choose Gratitude Over Resentment

Feelings of resentment also make it hard to be compassionate. We resent others when we think they are getting more or are being treated better than we are. Feelings of resentment are especially common when resources are limited or times are uncertain, as is the case today. I learned about overcoming resentment some time ago when my wife, Jenny, had a terrible case of food poisoning. After I rushed her to the hospital and watched the medical team give her intensive emergency treatment, I started to worry that the poison in her system was so toxic that it could be fatal.

In that moment, when I thought I might lose my life partner, all the petty resentments I'd ever felt toward her disappeared instantaneously. All I felt was gratitude for her and an overwhelming awareness that I didn't want to lose her. For me, this awareness of gratitude is the way to reduce resentment. Gratitude helps me see the resentments that are superficial. Resentment, after all, is believing I didn't get what I deserved. Gratitude, on the other hand, is noticing the many great gifts I receive from the people I know. As such, gratitude is the antidote to resentment.

In conclusion, let me add three final points. First, seeing the good in others can reduce moralistic judgment, and being grateful can reduce resentment, but that doesn't mean we should ignore unjust actions or abuse. For example, we need to fight against (not affirm) systemic racism, sexism, and all forms of dehumanizing action by people and systems, and we need to confront (not excuse) those who dehumanize us.

Second, showing compassion for others is difficult if we don't feel compassion for ourselves. As Kristin Neff (2012) has explained, we are often harder on ourselves than we would ever be on anyone else. To be compassionate toward others, we need to start with ourselves. That is, we should "treat ourselves," Neff writes, "with the same kindness, caring, and compassion we would show to a good friend" (p. 6).

Third, deep change takes deep work. Becoming more grateful and more affirmative is a lifetime journey. I know this from personal experience. I won't become a new person overnight, but I can take one small step toward being more affirmative and more grateful, one step closer to being the compassionate person my friends, colleagues, and loved ones need.

Taking that one step won't completely change me, but it might help me be more compassionate, and, on any given day, that might be all that someone needs.

Reflection Questions for "When Times Are Tough, Show Compassion"

1. What did you used to think of compassion? What do you think now?
2. What holds us back from compassion? Why?
3. What role does gratitude play in compassion?
4. What do you most agree with from the article?

NOTES

Principles of Coaching Video

Moralistic Judgment

https://youtu.be/ZHr0XVkVyw4
Watch this video to hear about how we should avoid moralistic judgment so we can remain true partners.

Learning Path #6 Resources

What Role Does the Partnership Principle of Praxis Play in Coaching?

Guiding Question: What role does the Partnership Principle of praxis play in coaching?

Resources: Praxis scenarios

Activity:

1. Use the praxis scenarios to learn, discuss, and reflect.
2. Wrap up the learning by discussing how praxis will play a role in your coaching.

PRAXIS SCENARIOS

Purpose: To consider and reflect on how the Partnership Principle of praxis can be used in coaching situations.

Scenario 1

Nichole is coaching Julie whom she has known "forever." Julie tells Nichole she wants to work on "higher levels of student engagement" and tells Nichole she would love her to bring her some strategies because she is "at a loss with these kids." Nichole is excited Julie has asked for coaching support—even if it is just to find strategies. That said, she knows Julie would love the Impact Cycle and seeing her students meet goals if she could just get her started on the process. Nichole has found several engagement strategies to share. Her coaching meeting with Julie is next week, and she is worried Julie will just take the strategies, vent, and not want to set a student-focused goal.

Reflect

As Nichole's coach, outline next steps to help her move from "good intentions to action" with Julie. How could she enroll her in an Impact Cycle? Be as detailed as possible when describing her next steps to move Nichole into the Identify Phase and setting a PEERS goal.

NOTES

Scenario 2

Rhonda is coaching Matt. He is new to the school this year. Matt tells her he wants to work on classroom management. Matt says he already knows what he wants for a goal and wonders if Rhonda could bring him some strategies and come in and coach him for the next few classes, just until he "gets the curriculum down." Rhonda comes to you, her Coach Lead, seeking advice. She was truly hoping to begin an Impact Cycle with Matt and feels he would be willing but doesn't have a clear understanding of Instructional Coaching as he is new to the district.

Reflect

Describe in as much detail as possible what your coaching conversation with Rhonda would sound like. What kinds of questions would you ask her? What resources might you use? How would you help her partner with Matt to help him set a student-focused goal and commit to starting the Impact Cycle coaching process?

NOTES

Learning Path #7 Resources

How Can I Reflect on My Use of the Partnership Principles?

Guiding Question: How can I reflect on my use of the Partnership Principles?

Resources: Video Reflection: Partnership Principles

Activity:

1. Use the Partnership Principles Video activity to reflect on your practice.
2. Wrap up the learning path by discussing how video can continue to inform your coaching.

VIDEO REFLECTION: PARTNERSHIP PRINCIPLES

Purpose: To reflect on how we embody Partnership Principles in our conversations with others.

Materials: In this activity, participants will be recording themselves during a conversation. Cell phones make great tools for this, and no other tool is needed. Simply find a way to prop up the phone and record the conversations that will happen in pairs. The video will be reviewed by the partnership only, not shared with anyone else or in the group setting.

Process:

1. Invite participants to choose a partner for this activity.
2. Once all participants have a partner, explain that they will be audio or video recording conversations with each other to reflect on the Partnership Principles. Recording yourself can be uncomfortable, so let them know that they have a choice: They can choose to only *audio* record themselves, or they can *video* record themselves. They can choose their preference when it comes time to record. Consider, too, choosing a space for this learning opportunity that has room for pairs to spread out and not be close to each other during the recording process. An invitation to leave the room and meet back after they record their conversations might also be an option, to ensure the learners feel safe using video.
3. The first step will be for each set of partners to review the Seven Partnership Principles and talk about what they mean to them as coaches.
    a. Optional resources to use for reference: The Principles of Coaching videos or the “Seven Principles for True Partnership” article.
4. Once the partnerships have reviewed the principles and shared their ideas about what they mean for coaches, invite them to rejoin their partners and decide who will be “Partner A” and who will be “Partner B.”
    a. Partner A will coach first, and Partner B will be the coachee first (coachee = the person being coached).

5. The task will include the partners taking turns coaching one another, while also recording the conversation. For each round, the coach can ask the following kickstart question to begin the conversation. Then, the partnership should continue in the conversation for 3 minutes, recording the entire exchange. The first round will follow the following structure:
    a. Press record on your phone, pointing at the partnership.
    b. Partner A (coach): "What's on your mind today?" (This is the kickstart question.)
    c. Partner B (coachee): responds.
    d. Continue the conversation for 3 minutes.
6. Once Round 1 is complete, Round 2 will begin, and the partners will rotate roles. Partner B will coach, and Partner A will be coached. Remember to record!
7. Once both rounds are complete, everyone will rewatch the video of themselves coaching and use the questions below to reflect:
    a. Which Partnership Principles do I observe in my coaching?
    b. Which Partnership Principles come naturally to me?
    c. Which Partnership Principles were not observed in my coaching?
    d. What are my next actions?
8. Once all participants have had time to reflect on their video, they will meet back with their partners and share their noticings with each other.
9. After the partners have time to talk together, invite the whole group to share answers to the reflection questions out loud. *Do not ask to have participants share the video with the whole group.*
10. Once the activity has come to a close, invite them to continue using video as a way to reflect on their practice.

Modifications/Notes:

- Time for each round can be modified to fit the needs of the group.
- Groups of three can be used if it makes it easier to record the coach/coachee conversations.
- Not everyone will be comfortable with using video. Invest in the psychological safety of the learning environment, allow people to choose their groups/partners, and respect the confidentiality of the videos by allowing people to record on their own devices.
- This activity can also be divided up into two rounds. Round 1 can be where coaches reflect on *any* of the Partnership Principles they observe in their conversations. Round 2 can be used for coaches to intentionally look for how they have embodied one or two specific principles. For example, coaches might rewatch/relisten to their recording and see how they embodied the Partnership Principle of dialogue.

END OF CHAPTER REFLECTION

Now that you have explored learning opportunities about the Partnership Principles, take time to reflect on this Success Factor overall. Use the following reflection questions, or reflect in your own way, and fill the lines with your ideas.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. On a scale of 1 to 10, 1 being not at all and 10 being significant, what impact did these Learning Paths have on your practice? What led you to choose the rating you did?
2. What is a major aha you had as you learned about the Partnership Principles?
3. What will you do next with your ideas?

NOTES

NOTES