

*“The reformation of the schools must begin with the teachers, and no program that does not include the personal rehabilitation of teachers can ever overcome the passive resistance of the old order”* (Waller, 1932). How prophetic...classroom teachers are the ones who make a difference in the lives of students; that means we need to pay attention to what and how teachers teach and students learn. Even as far back as the 30’s, someone knew that changes to student learning had to occur at the classroom level – with teachers. Where have we heard that before?

While I don’t exactly agree with the phrase, “rehabilitation of teachers” I understand that helping teachers recognize what practices must change and then helping them to change is a type of rehabilitation. After all, rehabilitation is a *restoration* or *rejuvenation* of sorts.

Instructional coaching definitely addresses classroom issues and how to help teachers revitalize their repertoire. And, it is accomplished in real time with no risk of evaluation. Remember, instructional coaching is an effective teacher professional development model designed to support student, teacher, and administrator growth. Consistent coaching provides ample opportunities for teachers to re-energize and replenish their teaching “toolbox” with both evidence-based instructional strategies and more importantly, with conversations that revolve around teaching and learning. These conversations build teacher capacity, help teachers move from isolation to collaboration, increase student engagement, and improve student learning. These conversations become onsite, professional learning opportunities for all members of a learning community.

There is no argument about the importance of school leadership in the learning process. We know that administrators want to be effective leaders and provide relevant professional development opportunities to their staff members. Unfortunately, they don’t always have the time to wear that hat so the instructional coaches are critical for sharing effective professional development. Once they share the professional development that is relevant and tied to standards, practice, and research, coaches work with the staff to transfer the professional development to professional learning.

Here’s the advantage... the coaches work with their teaching colleagues every day; they have the “pulse” of the school because they engage in continuous conversations with the teachers. They regularly engage in the BDA cycle of consultation enabling them to know the individuals and helping them make data-driven decisions that influence the individual, the team, and the whole school community. Administrators rely on their instructional coaches to co-plan,

co-facilitate, and debrief with teachers to ensure that the most relevant professional development is offered to the staff with the follow up support as an essential element. An instructional coaching framework implemented successfully makes all the difference in the school community. After all, where else does a teacher have a non-evaluative partner with whom to share ideas, talk about the good, bad, and the ugly of classroom instruction, and rehearse the delivery so that every day effective instruction is at the center of teaching and learning?

All professional development needs to be connected to the school wide improvement goals. It does not make sense to offer professional development that does not meet the needs of the teachers or students. Coaches and administrators need to work together to co-construct what school wide improvement looks like and must offer multiple ongoing opportunities for teachers and coaches to work together to put that professional development into practice.

Lambert et al (1995) explains that this collaborative process is “the reciprocal processes that enable participants in an educational community to construct common meanings that lead toward a common purpose about schooling.” Successful schools have coaches, administrators and teachers with a shared vision, common language, and consistency of practice that supports student learning, teacher expertise, and school wide improvement.

Coaches and teachers must continue to engage in conversations around the BDA cycle of consultation and invite teachers to co-plan and co-facilitate ongoing learning opportunities. They must help teachers create PLCs that support learning for teachers and other school leaders, engage in article and book studies where teachers nourish their own professional growth, and generate conversations about how students learn and how all students can reach their fullest potential.

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