

Sustained and Integrated Observation and Coaching Cycles

Description:

Observation and coaching cycles provide targeted support that extends district, whole school, and/or team professional learning to classrooms and teachers, and helps teachers meet their individual professional development goals. When successful, observation and coaching cycles can help to reinforce a professional learning culture of continuous learning and to support instructional experts in building strong, collaborative relationships with teachers so that teachers feel comfortable taking risks, trying new things, and giving and receiving feedback as a means to improving their performance.

In an effective observation and coaching cycle, an instructional expert regularly observes teachers as they deliver instruction and provides timely, actionable feedback and support until proficiency in a target skill is consistently observed. The instructional experts who facilitate the observation and coaching cycles have demonstrated expertise in a specific subject (ELA, math, social studies, or science) and grade band in the context of college and career ready standards (CCRS) and are often also responsible for facilitating professional development (PD) and collaborative planning time (CPT) at the school.

While we will refer to these instructional experts as “coaches” throughout this BBP, we are not simply referring to traditional coaching roles. Instead, we use the term more broadly to refer to any faculty members who can provide coaching and instructional support to teachers, for example, principals, other administrators (assistant principals, directors of instruction, academic deans), special education and ELL leads, and teacher leaders. While some may consider “coaches” and “administrators” as distinct roles, schools should consider all available resources when determining how to provide regular, frequent cycles of high quality instructional support to teachers. This may include using a combination of full or part-time coaches and teacher leaders, as well as the support of school administrators and other teacher evaluators.

Rationale:

Observation and coaching cycles ...

Support the application of school or district professional learning goals at the classroom-level in order to advance student achievement. The professional development that teachers experience is often not targeted or relevant to their grade and curriculum and it rarely allows for the study and practice necessary to enable deep understanding and consistent improvements in instruction. In teaching teams, teachers are able to deepen their understanding of how to apply the professional development learnings to their lesson planning and analysis of student work and assessments. Observation and coaching cycles extend this learning even further, allowing teachers to reflect on how to implement these learnings in their actual instruction and the specific decisions and actions in the classroom that need to change as a result.

Enable individual teacher growth. Individual goals and growth areas for each teacher are also an important part of observation and coaching cycles. Teachers and their observers can identify specific areas for improvement, such as classroom management or allowing productive struggle, and focus an entire observation and coaching cycle on just those one or two elements until proficiency is achieved. By repeating this process of systematically identifying and targeting specific areas for improvement, individual teachers can radically improve their performance over time. Numerous studies, including a recent study on high dosage coaching for teachers in New Orleans, have shown that teachers who received targeted feedback and actionable recommendations from a qualified instructional expert in focused cycles show significant growth in effective teaching. (Improving Teachers' Practice Across Grades and Subjects: Experimental Evidence on Individualized Coaching. Kraft, Blazer; Harvard, Brown. 2014)

Reinforce adult culture of continuous improvement, and the right teacher candidates. When teachers receive regular cycles of observation and timely, actionable feedback explicitly intended to help them help kids learn, they are given a clear message that there is always room for improvement, but growth is a collaborative process at the school and that they will be supported throughout their journey. Cycles of observation and coaching represent an unparalleled opportunity to define and regularly reinforce a growth mindset and high expectations culture—for both children and adults—which can ultimately attract stronger candidates to the school who have high standards and who see coaching as a way of achieving their potential. (The Irreplaceables. 2012; Mirage, 2015. TNTP)

KEY COMPONENTS FOR OBSERVATION AND COACHING CYCLES

1. Sufficient number of instructional experts to ensure ratios of 8 to 12 teachers per full-time administrator or coach, and 2 to 4 teachers per part-time teacher leader.
2. Prior to assignment, instructional experts demonstrate and validate their expertise by subject and grade level, and in particular in the context of CCRS.
3. Teachers and leaders clearly articulate and own an instructional vision that holds observation and coaching cycles as integral to its attainment
4. Curriculum, assessments, and observation and coaching tools are aligned with grade and content-specific college- and career-ready standards (use 2020 language)
5. Sufficient time has been allocated to support observation and coaching cycles and related time, such as CPT and whole-faculty PD.
6. Instructional experts receive training and pursue ongoing professional learning on both content knowledge and instructional application, and effective coaching practices and tools.

Clarify purpose: Before deciding how to organize resources for observation and coaching cycles, clarify their purpose in your school.

- *What is your instructional vision and what role will observation and coaching cycles have in helping you work toward it?*
 - Instructional vision example: *We must ensure this year that our students”*
 - *In English language arts*
 - *Comprehend(access) meaningful, on grade level texts*
 - *Speak and write in response to meaningful texts*
 - *In Math*
 - *Master priority concepts and practice standards (not just procedures)*
 - *Target remedial content that allows faster on grade level practice*
- *What new and/or complex skills and concepts, such as those related to CCRS, do student and teacher data indicate are your top priorities for teacher learning?*
 - *e.g., Habits of discussion, text dependent questions and tasks, lesson planning, etc.*
- *Do you have a priority group of teachers who may need more frequent support the regular levels of support that you have provided in the past?*
 - *e.g., new teachers, specific-subject teachers, or teachers in certain grades*

MAKING IT WORK: RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS



PEOPLE: Note implications for your Job and Teacher Assignment and Hiring Plan

Allocate enough expert positions so that each instructional expert has a reasonable load to support instructional improvements. To be truly effective, full-time coaches and administrators should have a caseload of no more than 8-12 teachers whom they are responsible for coaching, facilitating content-focused CPT, and evaluating through formal observations. Having a manageable number of teachers to support is critical to success because it takes a tremendous amount of time and capacity to effectively cultivate the developmental needs of teachers, to conduct the data analysis and curriculum planning needed for CPT, and to do thorough formal evaluations that have been informed by months of data collection and observation. Teacher leaders who are not full-time should only be responsible for coaching and observation cycles for 2 to 4 teachers at a time.

Key Questions:

- *Do you have sufficient instructional expert positions for caseloads of 8–12 for administrators and coaches, and 2–4 for teacher leaders to enable observations every other week across teachers and the facilitation of related content CPT meetings?*
- *If no to the above question, how can you adjust your staffing to enable manageable loads for observation and coaching cycles for either your entire faculty or for teachers in priority subjects and grades? Consider the following options:*
 - *Designating an additional instructional expert position (this may involve eliminating a position less central to student academic gains),*
 - *Moving non-instructional responsibilities away from staff who you want to free up to assume more instructional work, and*
 - *Establishing or broadening teacher leader positions.*

Ensure experts have deep expertise in the target subjects and grades in the context of CCRS. With the widespread adoption of standards that set students up to be college and career-ready, schools are called upon to adapt teaching to reflect these shifts. To do this, teachers need support from instructional experts with demonstrated expertise in the understanding and application of CCRS for their subject and grade.

Key Questions:

- *How will you assess and/or validate the instructional expertise of people serving in instructional support positions, by discipline and grade level, and in particular in the context of CCRS?*
- *Are current or potential instructional experts also able to model a growth mindset focused on support and continuous improvement?*
- *Do your current staff who hold instructional expert positions have the right expertise? If not...*
 - *Is any reassignment possible/necessary to achieve a better match of expertise with role?*
 - *What new hiring might be necessary to get the expertise you want?*
 - *What training?*

Establish an instructional expert development group (IEDG). The IEDG, composed of the school's instructional experts and led by the principal, is focused on developing building-wide capacity as a means to effectively support strong, CCRS-aligned instruction throughout the building. The IEDG is often a subset of the broader Instructional Leadership Team (ILT) and is

focused explicitly on building the practice of those who play coaching roles at the school. The group has three charges: 1.) to improve members' effectiveness in facilitation and coaching, 2.) to build the knowledge and practice related to specific content areas and grade levels for which individual coaches are responsible, and 3.) to feed data and recommendations about teacher growth and needs to the ILT to monitor and evolve professional learning and instructional decisions across the entire building.

Within the IEDG, coaches meet as a group weekly or once every other week and participate in learning walks regularly to address problems of practice, norm, and to deepen understanding of the standards and effective coaching practices. Additionally, they study via webinars and readings, participate in external or district PD, and may work with a paid partner like Relay Graduate School of Education, the Achievement Network or TNTP to build knowledge and skills.

Note that there are multiple uses of the term "instructional leadership team." In this BBP, we define the ILT as composed of instructional experts and the teachers who represent the key instructional groups of the school, for example, grade level or content teams, special education and ELL teams, electives, career and technology, etc. The role of the ILT is to determine the school's instructional vision, plan faculty professional learning, track progress toward meeting PD objectives, lead analysis of student data, make decisions about the school's curriculum and assessments, and more. The ILT is larger and broader than the IEDG, which has a more narrow membership and specific focus toward content- and grade-specific observation and coaching.

*See the Instructional Expert Development Group BBP for more information.

Key Questions:

- *Who is on the team? How is facilitation managed?*
- *What are its key needs (protocols, content learning, coaching practice)? As a group and by individual?*
- *What are the goals for the group as a whole and for each member?*
- *Do you need external support to ensure this group has the right expertise/training to address its key needs? If not, what other support can you mobilize from existing vendors or central?*



TIME: Note implications for Master Schedule, Job and Teacher Assignment and Annual Professional Learning Plan

Set schedules for initial goal-setting and ongoing coaching meetings—for coaches, administrators, teacher leaders, and teachers. Time is reserved, on an ongoing basis, on the calendars of both the coaches and the teachers that they work with.

At the beginning of the year, coaches should first sit down to learn more about the teachers that they will be supporting. The purpose of this discussion is to talk through the norms and practices of the observation and coaching cycles and to collaboratively set development goals, ones that reflect both schoolwide instructional vision and PD objectives as well as individual teacher needs. The key points from this meeting, including teacher development goals, are documented, shared after the meeting, and used in regular coaching meetings to chart progress.

Once school starts, coaches should determine their observation schedules a week or two in advance, budgeting an hour total for each teacher’s observation and coaching cycle. There are two components to each cycle: observations, which can vary in length between 15 minutes to a full class, and coaching discussions, which often takes 20 to 30 minutes (and is supported by the collaborative work and professional learning in the weekly CPT). The coaching discussions should occur within a day or two of the observation so that the instruction being discussed is still fresh in the minds of both teachers and coaches. In this respect, video can be a helpful tool to help both teachers and coaches review what happened in the classroom as part of their the discussion. Meetings can also made more efficient with the use of an online tracking tool where coaches can document target skills, specific observations, and agreed-upon next steps, and track a teacher’s progress against these elements in future sessions.

Traditionally, observation and coaching cycles have occurred every week or every two weeks throughout the year. However, a recent study of Match coaching in New Orleans showed that less frequent but more intensive bursts of observation and coaching can also be effective. In that study, teachers received four coaching bursts during the year where they were observed and coached every day for a full week on a particular skill, and these teachers made greater gains than teachers who only received the standard weekly or every other week coaching cycle. It’s important to note, however, that in the follow-up year of the study, when only three coaching bursts were implemented (instead of the initial four bursts), and teachers did not show the same level of growth.

Key Questions:

- *Which teachers do you believe will benefit the most from bi-weekly observation and coaching? Which teachers are in the “priority group” and require more frequent coaching, including lesson planning and modeling? What will that frequency be?*

- *Would four week-long coaching bursts with a total of 20 days of observation and coaching for teachers be preferable to 40 weeks of bi-weekly observation and coaching (also totaling 20 days)? If so, how do you plan for a schedule that model?*
- *What will potentially compete for observation and coaching time in instructional experts' schedules? What can be done to anticipate and reduce obstacles to them completing their cycles with teachers well?*
- *If teacher leaders will be doing observations and debriefs, do they have release time in their schedules that appropriately matches the time that they would be observing and coaching teachers?*
- *What routines and technology (Outlook, GCalendar) will be used to schedule specific time ongoing in a way that's aligned to teachers' needs? How will you build to common consistent use of these routines and technology?*

Use the comprehensive PD and ILT calendars to reinforce the role that observation and coaching cycles play in the integrated professional learning system.

Each school should have a comprehensive calendar that indicates when key professional learning events occur, for example, whole school PD, ILT meetings, assessment windows, parent events, etc. Drill-down versions of this calendar will also show the professional learning themes for different times of the year, for example, August may be “teaching expectations, routines, and procedures to build strong culture,” while September launches “our instructional vision: cognitively demanding tasks in every lesson.” At the start of the year, it’s important for school leaders to explain the alignment of the school’s overall instructional vision with key points in the professional learning calendar and to detail how these events are in service of the vision.

In addition to blocking out time at the start of the year to plan and to make the case for key professional learning events, leaders also need to make time to reach out to faculty members who are concerned about the observation and coaching cycles to understand and address their concerns. More generally, time and planning are necessary investments for school leaders to make if they want to build an adult professional learning culture where people feel comfortable asking questions, taking risks, and making mistakes—so that they can grow for themselves and for the students they teach.

Finally, in a culture of continuous improvement, it’s important to both build the structures to track progress and make adjustments, and to be transparent throughout the process. By sharing and distributing the calendar for monitoring the standards of teacher growth and student gains associated with observation and coaching, it adds enormous credibility to the endeavor and the people who are leading it.

When you build the IEDG meetings calendar, it's important to determine the focus for each session, including beginning of the year learning walks and norm setting, interim assessments, when formal evaluations are conducted, and when staffing decisions are made. At each IEDG meeting, two or three coaches will describe a coaching situation with a teacher and precisely describe the current challenge that they are facing. Tools such as the Consultancy Protocol and video footage can help to flesh out the evidence that the coach is presenting to help the group learn. In the first meeting, it's often helpful for the principal and other instructional experts with greater experience to model the practice that they want to see throughout the year.

Key Questions:

- *Have you allocated enough time in beginning of the year PD to explain observation and coaching cycles, including who is facilitating them, their rhythm (observation, feedback and recommendations, observation of implementation), the regular coaching meeting times for teachers, and the plan for assessing their impact?*
- *Have you connected coaching and observation cycles to school-wide and target group objectives and themes across the year? For example, if in the first four weeks of school, your emphasis is on positive classroom culture, do the PD calendar and ILT agendas show that cycles will support this?*
- *Which teachers on the ILT can champion and articulate the value of observation and coaching cycles to meet school PD objectives, and help teachers improve in their individual growth areas? Who models your culture of growth mindset and focus on student outcomes?*
- *What language and images will make the path of your professional learning from whole group PD, to CPT, to observation and coaching cycles clear to all stakeholders in your community?*
- *Who in your community is apprehensive about observation and coaching cycles and how will you address their concerns? When are you meeting as an ILT to plan communication with faculty members who may need additional time and attention to understand the purpose and practice of regular observation cycles?*
- *Is your schedule for tracking observation and coaching cycle impact at the right frequency? Do you need to reduce attention in other areas (school or district initiatives) to ensure this is a priority?*

Ensure sufficient time for CPT (~90 mins/week) and for instructional experts to prepare for its productive facilitation. You've heard about enough time for CPT in other ERS content area and yet, we're mentioning it again here! Why? Because providing sufficient time for adult collaboration is the foundation of effective school work, including observation and coaching cycles. If you think about professional learning as a stream that flows through your district or school: the stream originates in the district or faculty PD, it flows out to CPT where it becomes more tangible, specific, and relevant as teachers apply it in their lesson planning, and then it finally manifests, alive, in the classroom.

Key Questions:

- *Do you need to adjust your master schedule to provide 90 minutes each week for teams who share the same content and grade?*
- *Have your instructional experts blocked out time in their weekly calendars to prepare for the CPT meetings they facilitate?*

Allocate the time and set the schedule for instructional expert development.

Instructional experts need time reserved in the following ways to build their coaching and content knowledge and practice:

1. Summer and school year professional learning to deepen their subject- and grade-specific expertise and coaching skills.
2. Regular IEDG meetings, and longer ones following interim assessments.
3. Annual schedule of learning walks to norm observations and planned coaching, and to build inter-rater reliability across the expert group during formal evaluation season,
4. Standing supervision meetings between the principal and coaches, and time to co-observe teachers and debrief ideas for coaching on a regular basis.

Key Questions:

- *What are the known dates for content-focused professional learning? For coaching professional learning?*
- *When will the instructional expert development meetings happen?*
- *If teacher leaders will support observation, does the schedule need to change for them to be available at this time?*
- *Do you have time allocated for coaching learning walks to norm your observations?*



MONEY: Note implications for Budget and Staffing and Job and Teacher Assignment

Allocate funds to pay for PD support to experts in target content areas and/or effective coaching practices—may be to outside providers or to additional district-provided resources.

In every district there are schools that don't have instructional experts who have the content knowledge and skills to help teachers understand and apply the shifts of the Common Core or their updated state standards. Fortunately help is available, either from nationally recognized providers such as Relay Graduate School of Education, the Achievement Network, and TNTP, or from district central offices, which are often working to build capacity to meet this need.

Key Questions:

- *What nationally recognized organizations are working with schools in my district? How will you connect with schools and colleagues experiencing their support to find out its effect (demonstrated by data), its scope (number of teachers served/connection to CPT), and the cost?*
- *For local and regional organizations that provide coaching support, how will you assess and/or validate the instructional expertise of their coaches, by discipline and grade level, and in particular in the context of college and career-ready standards?*
- *Is it possible to "purchase" additional time of district central office resources, such as content coaches?*
- *For all the options above, what is the plan and the cost over time for building the capacity of potential instructional experts in your school?*

Budget for stipends to teachers serving as Teacher Leaders facilitating cycles of observation and planning and/or CPT; and, if the teacher leader program has not launched, allocate funds to guide its development.

The amount varies, but best practice is to provide a stipend for teacher leaders to both compensate them for the time beyond their regular work required to prepare for and manage cycles and CPT, and to recognize their instructional accomplishments as part of the school and/or district's career path.

Key Questions:

- *How much is required for teacher leader stipends?*
- *Do I have a clear job description for this position?*
- *What is the cost of supporting materials from a research-proven organization to guide the development of your teacher leader program?*

Purchase a coaching curriculum. One of the best ways to become a better coach is to learn from the best coaches. Investing in coaching curricula and the experts who know how to deliver that curricula can help to significantly improve the quality of coaching at your school. The curricula can help provide some baseline tools, for example, suggested rubrics for effective teaching by discipline and grade band, as well as guides that support the adaptive work of enabling adult learning, for example, norms for feedback and coaching conversations, routines for looking at student data, lesson modeling, and more.

Ensure our school has CCRS-aligned assessments and data reports to support coaching and enable visibility into teacher progress over time. Effective coaching cycles rely on multiple sources of data including student data, lesson plans, work in CPT, and classroom observations. Reports from interim assessments aligned to college and career ready standards provided in a timely and readable fashion equip teachers and coaches to see the impact of the coaching work that they've been doing together.

Key Question:

- *If you are not satisfied your current assessments and reporting meets the above criteria, where can you source better supports? How much will this cost? What is the cost in time and management for your team to use the new resources?*

Consider video technology to enhance observations and/or enable coaches to “see” classes when they're not there. The practice of recording instruction can significantly enhance the coaching experience because coaches and teachers can observe the footage together later as part of their debrief discussion. This can be a particularly cost-effective solution given that video footage can usually be shot for free via existing smartphones and computers. There are also services that offer 360-degree video and communication technology that enable teachers to record themselves (audio via a lavalier) and upload the video to an online platform so that their coach can observe virtually during times when in-person observations are not possible. Other services, such as My Teaching Partner, also provide the coaching services directly.

Key Questions:

- *Given the availability of your coaches, particularly if they are teacher leaders who have their teaching responsibilities, is investing in observation technology a cost effective enabler of coaching? Even without teacher leaders, could observation technology help with collaborative planning as teachers could “see” the lessons others are simultaneously teaching?*
- *Are there people in your building who are leaders in using technology you can ask to work on and lead this project? Can they help to increase other staff's comfort with video?*

POTENTIAL CHALLENGES	POTENTIAL SOLUTIONS
Instructional experts don't have enough expertise in priority disciplines and/or grades.	Source national organizations or the district to provide assistance—for pay—and/or use observations and PD resources from Student Achievement Partners, www.achievethecore.org
Staff poised to serve as instructional experts have content expertise, but not the skills to work effectively with adults to help them learn.	Provide explicit instruction and coaching for instructional experts on how to maximize their impact working with adult peers. This might include professional development on facilitating meetings, recording observation notes, structuring debriefing and reflection conversations with colleagues, and organizing team data to identify instructional action steps and track progress.
Teachers worry about increased presence in classrooms for informal observations	Focus on building trust and a growth mindset with adults. Prove through actions that regular observations are supportive, rather than evaluative.
Experts conducting observations get pulled away to do other things. Debriefs don't consistently happen within 24 hours of the observation	Use this as a Problem of Practice in your Instructional Expert Development team. What is getting in the way of instructional experts or teachers protecting the time? What are some remedies to this problem? Technical remedy example: Set implementations benchmarks (observations happen for every teacher at least once every 2 weeks), and review metric reporting at meetings
Regular observations are not aligned with the formal observation tool.	Use the observation and coaching tools that are specific to ELA or math and the grade band and aligned to CCRS. These should be most supportive of the learning goals of your curriculum and assessments (assuming the curriculum and assessments are CCRS aligned). Work with central office to evolve the district tool.
Some coaches do not have formal evaluation authority	Coaches and formal evaluators work to align both their respective lenses and tools for providing coaching and evaluation, and their language and expectations for consistent messaging and support to teachers.
Coaching is not integrated with other professional growth systems, like teaming and PD days, etc.	During spring and summer, create a comprehensive professional development calendar that aligns and focuses all activities; in ILT, faculty meetings, CPT, and coaching and observation cycles; to a small number (1-3) instructional priorities. If the problem is that coaches are not aligning their practices, address this as a Problem of Practice and/or in principal to coach supervision meetings.
The curriculum is not aligned with CCRS and so teachers have a poor starting point for CCRS planning and teaching	Bring this problem to the ILT and investigate solutions for CCRS curriculum, including free resources such as EngageNY. Surface problem with central office.

Research

- *The Skillful Leader*, A Platt, C Tripp, W Ogden, and R Fraser. 2000, Research for Better Teaching
- *Driven by Data*, P Bambrick-Santoyo. 2010, Josey-Bass
- *Leverage Leadership*, P Bambrick-Santoyo. 2012, Josey-Bass
- *Learning by Doing*, R DuFour, R DuFour, R Eaker, and T Many, 2010, Solution Tree Press
- *Mindset*, C Dweck, 2006, Ballantine Books
- *Difficult Conversations*, D Stone, B Patton, and S Heen. 1999, Penguin Press
- "Improving Teachers' Practice Across Grades and Subjects: Experimental Evidence on Individualized Coaching." Kraft, Blazer; Harvard, Brown. 2014
- "Mirage," TNTP, 2015
- "Teaching Higher: Educators' Perspectives on Common Core Implementation." T Kane, A Owens, Marinell, D Thal, D Staiger. Harvard. 2016
- "What Supports Do Teachers Need to Help Students Meet Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts and Literacy?" J Kaufman, L Hamilton, B Stecher, S Naftel, M Robbins, L Thompson, C Garber, S Faxon-Mills, V. D Opfer. 2016, Rand Corporation.

Sincere thanks to the reviewers for ERS Coaching and Instructional Development tools:

Mary Driscoll, Boston Public Schools
Toby Romer, Newton Public Schools

Observation and Coaching Cycles to Improve Instruction at Queens Metropolitan High School

NEW YORK, NY

“Gone are the days of working in isolation or being on your own instructional island. Collaboration is a major factor in what drives our school culture.”

—Assistant Principal Tabitha Cruz

Context: Queens Metropolitan High School is a diverse urban high school serving 1,100 students in the New York City borough of Queens. When Greg Dutton became principal in 2012, only 62 percent of students at the new school were on track to graduate. Tension between the teachers and the school’s previous leadership team had also created a weak and distrustful staff culture. A key focus area for Principal Dutton was on transforming the staff culture by emphasizing the importance of measuring results and of providing and receiving actionable feedback, through the school’s new coaching cycle model.

KEY COMPONENTS

1. Create Low Spans of Review

The 8 members of the Instructional Expert Development Group (IEDG) at Queens Metro—Principal Dutton, four Assistant Principals, one Principal-in-Training, and two Teacher Coaches—are each assigned to support roughly 15 teachers, which gives them the opportunity to really engage with their teachers.

2. Articulate a Shared Instructional Vision

The observation and coaching cycle model was introduced to the staff as a key component of the school’s professional learning system and significant time was invested in rolling out the program to ensure staff buy-in.

3. Ensure Alignment with Curricula & Assessments

The coaching cycle is aligned with the school’s data driven instruction model, which organizes teachers and students around a clear, cyclical method for identifying and quickly addressing gaps in student learning over the course of the school year. Queens Metro also ensured that the coaching cycle supported the school’s implementation of new Common-Core curricula.

4. Provide Sufficient Time to Support Observation and Coaching Cycles

The biweekly coaching cycle includes two observations: one 15–30 minute observation, followed by a 20 minute in-person feedback meeting that takes place within 24 hours to give teachers the opportunity to adjust instruction and incorporate feedback, followed by a second 15 minute observation and additional feedback meetings as needed. Coaching cycles occur every other week, giving teachers the opportunity to further adapt and adjust their instruction based on the results of the coaching, before entering another cycle.

5. Provide Ongoing Training and Support for Instructional Experts

Each IEDG member is responsible for a core subject area (Math, ELA + Special Education, Science, and Social Studies), to ensure that each observer is in a strong position to provide content-specific feedback. The IEDG also sets aside two days during the summer and one team meeting a month specifically to discuss the coaching cycle model and to norm on how to give constructive, actionable feedback. IEDG members use video cameras and iPhones to record some of their own observation and feedback sessions, which are then reviewed during full-team IEDG meetings to provide each observer with feedback and suggestions on how to improve.

Every quarter, Principal Dutton also accompanies each IEDG member on three observation and feedback meetings, in order to provide direct feedback to each individual. In the first year of the coaching cycle model, IEDG members also taped themselves during their coaching sessions and sent the recordings to Paul Bambrick-Santoyo, author of *Driven by Data, Leverage Leadership & Great Habits, Great Readers* and former Chief Schools Officer at Uncommon Schools, to receive feedback on their coaching skills.

LEARNING FROM IMPLEMENTATION

- **Importance of developing a growth mindset:** One of the challenges that the IEDG faced was making teachers feel comfortable with the idea of more frequent observation and feedback. The goal was for teachers to perceive the coaching cycle model as supportive and helpful to their professional growth, rather than as more opportunities for administrators to provide “nit-picky feedback” or to conduct “gotcha” checks. One of the ways that the IEDG accomplished this was by focusing on providing meaningful feedback paired with actionable strategies that teachers could implement immediately in their classrooms.

- **Openness and willingness to embrace feedback:** Principal Dutton and the IEDG also recognized the importance of applying the same principles of feedback and adjustment to their own work. Throughout the year, the IEDG administers anonymous surveys and other check-points to gather feedback from teachers on how to improve the coaching cycle model. For example, teachers expressed interest in receiving more content feedback (e.g., feedback around the tasks and activities that they were giving students), instead of just the instructional practice feedback (e.g., feedback on what the teacher was doing) that they had been receiving. As a result, the IEDG adjusted their approach to provide a better balance of both types of feedback.

RESULTS

In 2014, two years after Principal Dutton arrived at Queens Metro, the school's four-year graduation rate rose to 89%, which was 20 points above the New York City average and 18 points above the Queens borough average. Queens Metro students were also significantly outperforming their peers across the city on the state Regents examinations, for example, Earth Science Regents passing rates had increased from 58% proficient to 80% proficient. In 2015, U.S. News and World Report awarded Queens Metropolitan High School a Bronze medal in its national ranking of the best high schools in America.

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