

Title: Summary of research/resources on instructional coaching

Date: September 2013

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Question: What does the research say about:

- How frequently coaching must take place for teachers to effectively use new practices;
- What the duration of the coaching relationship should be;
- Whether there is a known coach-teacher ratio to allow adequate time and quality of coaching;
- Effective coaching models; and
- Effective feedback strategies?

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Response:

To answer the request, REL West staff searched selected databases for relevant resources (see “Methods” section on the last page). The evidence on the effectiveness of coaching as a strategy for increasing the instructional quality of teaching and improving student learning is in its early stages. Therefore, we did not uncover research that definitively answers your specific questions; however, we include references from the literature on the more general topic of instructional coaching. We organized the information we found into the following categories:

1. **Reports and articles:** Research reports and policy-oriented articles about coaching.
  - Citations include a link to a free online version when available. When not available, we have attached a PDF version of the article.
  - Citations are accompanied by an abstract, excerpt, or summary written by the author or publisher of the article.
2. **Relevant organizations** that focus on coaching that may provide helpful information.

We have not done an evaluation of these resources or organizations, but rather provide them for your information only.

## Reports & Articles

Annenberg Institute for School Reform, Brown University. (2004). *Instructional coaching: Professional development strategies that improve instruction*. Providence, RI: Author. Retrieved on September 24, 2013, from <http://annenberginstitute.org/pdf/InstructionalCoaching.pdf>

*Excerpt:* As coaching has emerged as an increasingly common component of systemic reform, the Annenberg Institute has had the opportunity to work with, learn from, and observe in districts that are considering or engaged in instructional coaching as part of their professional development systems. Over time and in varied settings, we have observed [strategies for supporting effective coaching and] some noteworthy challenges to effective coaching.

Borman, J., & Feger, S. (2006). *Instructional coaching: Key themes from the literature*. Providence, RI: The Education Alliance, Brown University. Retrieved on September 12, 2013, from [http://www.alliance.brown.edu/pubs/pd/tl\\_coaching\\_lit\\_review.pdf](http://www.alliance.brown.edu/pubs/pd/tl_coaching_lit_review.pdf)

*Excerpt:* The Education Alliance at Brown University, working in partnership with Hezel Associates, produced this literature review on instructional coaching to serve as resource to the TeacherLine Design Team. Given a limited time frame and budget, the Education Alliance offers the following scan and synthesis of key themes from the literature on instructional coaching. The following synthesis is more modest in scope than a comprehensive literature review. It addresses several salient questions about instructional coaches, looking across a variety of research studies and practitioner accounts...To analyze the literature on instructional coaching, the evaluation team, with feedback from the Design Team, framed a series of questions on instructional coaching. These questions guided both the analysis of the research and its presentation in this report. The questions are as follows:

- How do differing theories shape the work of coaches?
- What do instructional coaches do? What are their primary tasks and activities?
- How is coaches' work structured?
- What kinds of knowledge, skills, and dispositions do coaches need to do their job?
- What kinds of professional development and collaborative opportunities are available to coaches?

Bright, E., & Hensley, T. (2010). A study of the effectiveness of K-3 literacy coaches based on data from Reading First principals, teachers, and coaches in: Alabama, Alaska, Arizona, Arkansas, California, Illinois, Indiana, Maine, Massachusetts, Montana, New Jersey, North Dakota, Ohio, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Washington, Wyoming. Portsmouth, NH: National Reading Technical Assistance Center (NRTAC), RMC Research Corporation. Retrieved on September 12, 2013, from <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/readingfirst/support/effectivenessfinal.pdf>

*Excerpt:* Over the past six years, Reading First has provided the means for a tremendous increase in the number of school-based literacy coaches, and offers rich data about how coaches support teachers. The present study draws on a careful review of states' external evaluation reports, relevant literature and research pertaining to coaching, documents obtained from state and local education agencies about coach roles and responsibilities, and personal interviews with school-based literacy coaches. Topics addressed include the qualifications of the school-based literacy coach, roles of the coach, effectiveness of the coach, and coach perceptions of job satisfaction and expectations. This study attempts to update findings on the role of the literacy coach. Clearly, the coach's role is complex and varied; most would agree that it significantly affects the ability of school staff members to improve their reading instruction. Because teaching matters, school-based coaching responds to the national priority of improving teacher quality. Best of all, school-based coaching benefits students through supporting high-quality instruction.

Chien, C. (2013). Analysis of an instructional coach's role as elementary school language teachers' professional developer. *Current Issues in Education*, 16(1), 12. Retrieved on September 30, 2013, from <http://cie.asu.edu/ojs/index.php/cieatasu/article/view/1004>

*Abstract:* Coaches can provide teachers with quality professional development experiences by mentoring, providing workshops, modeling, or encouraging professional growth (York-Barr & Duke, 2004). This study focuses on the instructional coach's role in the professional development of teachers of English language learners (ELLs). The study has the following findings. First, the coach acted as a professional developer for teachers of ELLs in the workshop, because she designed and delivered the workshop, mentored teachers, modeled and scaffolded lessons in the lesson-planning process, modeled teaching, and led them to do self-reflection. Second, from the participating teachers' perspective, the instructional coach's knowledge and understanding of academic language made the workshop well-organized. The teachers of ELLs surveyed and interviewed found the instructional coach they worked with to be helpful, organized, and well-informed. Third, less follow-up coaching support and district policy on coaching made the workshop less effective. Two suggestions for coaches to be effective professional developers for language teachers are provided.

Deussen, T., Coskie, T., Robinson, L., & Autio, E. (2007). *"Coach" can mean many things: Five categories of literacy coaches in Reading First* (Issues & Answers Report, REL 2007–No. 005). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Regional Educational Laboratory Northwest. Retrieved on September 24, 2013, from <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED497517.pdf>

*Abstract:* Coaching is an important part of the federally funded Reading First initiative for K–3 students, but not all coaches define their job in the same way. This study examines data from and about literacy coaches in five western states and finds considerable variation in how they spend their time.

Driscoll, M. J. (2008). Embracing coaching as professional development. *Principal Leadership*, 9(2), 40–44.

*Abstract:* Because the author and his colleagues at the Center for Leadership and Learning Communities believe that instructional coaching is one of the most exciting developments in education in a long time, they have examined the questions this new strategy has raised for education leaders: Should coaching replace some traditional forms of teacher professional development? If not, how can coaching be integrated with other forms of professional development in the lives of teachers? How much group professional development is needed along with coaching? They have concluded that the relationship between coaching and group professional development should not be thought of in "either-or" terms, but rather "both-and."

Jorissen, K. T., Salazar, P., Morrison, H., & Foster, L. (2008). Instructional coaches: Lessons from the field. *Principal Leadership*, 9(2), 16–19.

*Abstract:* As members of the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) Task Force on Principal Preparation, the authors recently completed a study of the changing role of the secondary principal. One striking finding was that multiple roles and responsibilities leave today's principal feeling chronically harried and overworked. For principals in small or rural schools, the problem is compounded by a lack of support personnel. To keep the focus on instruction while juggling multiple roles, many principals are developing teacher leaders among their staff members. In schools across the country, teachers are taking on the role of "instructional coach" by working part-time or full-time as facilitators of professional learning. By using the effective strategies presented in this article, principals can ensure that professional learning becomes a school norm.

L'Allier, S., Elish-Piper, L., & Bean, R. M. (2010). What matters for elementary literacy coaching? Guiding principles for instructional improvement and student achievement. In R. M. Bean, N. Heisey, & C. M. Roller (Eds.), *Preparing reading professionals* (2nd ed., pp. 371–382). Newark, DE: International Reading Association. Retrieved on September 24, 2013, from <http://www.reading.org/Publish.aspx?page=bk835-LAllier-Bean.pdf&mode=retrieve&D=10.1598/9780872078352.LAllier&F=bk835-LAllier-Bean.pdf&key=27B11920-2E44-4DD2-9122-B136AC4F4626>

*Abstract:* Literacy coaches provide job-embedded professional development for teachers, and the number of literacy coaches in elementary schools is increasing. Although literacy coaching offers promise in terms of improving teacher practice and student achievement, guidance is needed regarding the qualifications, activities, and roles of literacy coaches. The seven guiding principles in this manuscript offer research-based directions for literacy coaching. The guiding principles address (1) the specialized knowledge needed for literacy coaching, (2) the amount of time that should be focused on working directly with teachers, (3) collaborative relationships with teachers, (4) research-based coaching activities, (5) intentional and “on-the-fly” coaching, (6) the coach as a literacy leader in the school, and (7) the evolution of the literacy coach over time. After each principle is introduced, the specific research that supports the principle is discussed. In addition, a vignette of each guiding principle is provided to illustrate the principle in action.

Marsh, J. A., Sloan-McCombs, J., Lockwood, J. R., Martorell, F., Gershwin, D., Naftel, S., Vi-Nhuan, L., Shea, M., Barney, H., & Crego, A. (2008). *Supporting literacy across the Sunshine State: A study of Florida middle school reading coaches*. Santa Monica, CA: The RAND Corporation. Retrieved on September 23, 2013, from [http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/monographs/2008/RAND\\_MG762.pdf](http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/monographs/2008/RAND_MG762.pdf)

*Abstract:* Although literacy skills needed to engage in the economy and public life have grown, the literacy skills of many adolescents remain low. One popular approach to improving student literacy is using school-based reading coaches; however, there is little empirical evidence regarding the nature of coaching and its effectiveness in changing teacher practice and/or its impact on student achievement, particularly at the secondary level. In 2006–2007, RAND sought to address this research gap by studying a statewide reading coach program in Florida that is situated within a broader state-led literacy policy, the Just Read, Florida! (JRF) initiative. Using a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods to examine the implementation and impact of Florida's reading coach program at the middle school level, and to investigate three primary questions: (1) How is the reading coach program being implemented by the state, districts, schools, and coaches? (2) What has been the impact of coaching on teachers' practice, students' achievement in reading and mathematics, and other outcomes? and (3) What features of models and practices for reading coaches are associated with better outcomes? Reported findings include: (1) Districts established similar policies and supports for coaches; (2) Common concerns about recruiting and retaining high quality coaches emerged; (3) Coaches' quality, particularly their ability to support adult learners, is positively related to several outcomes and viewed by some as an area of potential weakness; (4) Coaches indicated a desire for specific kinds of professional development; (5) Day-to-day work of coaches takes many forms; (6) District and school administrators, coaches, and teachers identified common barriers constraining coaches' ability and provide instructional support to many teachers; (7) Most coaches view school and district administrators as key supports for their work; (8) Many teachers and principals reported that the coach had positive effects on them and their schools; (9) The evidence is mixed regarding the impact of coaching on achievement; (10) The frequency with which coaches review assessment data with teachers is associated with positive outcomes and few other coaching implementation features were associated with student achievement. Based on study findings, the following recommendations are presented: (1) Provide guidance to school administrators in how to identify high quality coach candidates; (2) Develop a pipeline of qualified candidates; (3) Consider offering incentives and support to attract high-quality coaches and retain

them over time; (4) Continue professional development for coaches with some adjustments; (5) Encourage coaches to review assessment data with teachers; (6) Address barriers to enable coaches to work more with teachers, including more one-on-one work; (7) If the intent is for coaches to work with all teachers, address barriers to working across the content areas; (8) Continue to nurture school administrator support; and (9) Continue research on coaching. Although increasingly popular, coaching requires a significant investment of both financial and human resources. As the field gains more evidence on the effects of coaching on teachers, schools, and students, researchers can work to determine whether the benefits of this intervention are worth the cost when compared with other interventions.

Neufeld, B., & Roper, D. (2003). *Coaching: A strategy for developing instructional capacity: Promises and practicalities*. Washington, DC: The Aspen Institute and Providence, RI: The Annenberg Institute for School Reform. Retrieved on September 23, 2013, from <http://annenberginstitute.org/sites/default/files/product/268/files/Coaching.pdf>

*Excerpt:* This paper takes as its orientation the knowledge and skill that district leaders must draw on if they are to develop successful, systemwide approaches to coaching. However, the paper is also written to be of value to coaches, teachers, principals, and policymakers who can benefit from understanding what we call the promises and practicalities of coaching. Our analysis is based primarily on what we have learned from Education Matters' longitudinal, qualitative studies of this professional development approach in Boston, Corpus Christi, Louisville, and San Diego. Over the last six years, we conducted hundreds of in-depth interviews with coaches, teachers who work with coaches, principals, and central office administrators in an effort to learn about the design, implementation, and influence of coaching on whole-school, instructionally focused reform. In addition, we observed district-provided coach professional development as well as school-based professional development provided by coaches, and we reviewed pertinent documents related to coaches' work. During this time, we produced many reports on the progress of whole-school improvement in these districts with special attention to coaching and other learning opportunities for principals and teachers. This report reflects a synthesis of what we have learned.

Poglinco, S., Bach, A., Hovde, K., Rosenblum, S., Saunders, M., & Supovitz, J. (2003). *The heart of the matter: The coaching model in America's Choice schools*. Philadelphia, PA: Consortium for Policy Research in Education, University of Pennsylvania, Graduate School of Education. Retrieved on September 23, 2013, from [http://www.cpre.org/sites/default/files/researchreport/814\\_ac-06.pdf](http://www.cpre.org/sites/default/files/researchreport/814_ac-06.pdf)

*Excerpt:* In this report, the Consortium for Policy Research in Education (CPRE) explores the role of coaching in first-year (Cohort 4) America's Choice schools in grades K-8 as it relates to the implementation of readers and writers workshops, referred throughout this report as the literacy workshops. The reasons CPRE decided to concentrate on the coach/teacher relationship within the America's Choice design are two-fold. First, given that a coaching model was chosen by the designers of America's Choice as the main strategy to introduce standards-based instruction into the classroom, it followed logically that CPRE learn more about the challenges and benefits that such a model entails for America's Choice schools. For the purposes of this report, then, other important pieces of the America's Choice design are not discussed in depth. That is not to say that the instructional leadership of a principal or the school design team in an America's Choice school is not an essential element of the overall design; they are simply not covered in detail in this report in the interest of addressing the heart of the matter, the coaching model in America's Choice schools. Second, as a mechanism for the professional development of teachers, coaching is increasingly relied upon by schools and districts across the nation to train teachers on a particular set of instructional techniques and practices. By focusing on coaching, we hope that some of our findings regarding coaching in America's Choice schools may be helpful to other schools and districts experimenting with coaching models.

Yopp, D., Burroughs, E. A., Luebeck, J., Heidema, C., Mitchell, A., & Sutton, J. (2011). How to be a wise consumer of coaching: Strategies teachers can use to maximize coaching's benefits. *Journal of Staff Development*, 32(1), 50–53.

*Abstract:* Instructional coaching is gaining popularity as a school-based effort to increase teacher effectiveness and student achievement. A coach can be broadly defined as a person who works collaboratively with a teacher to improve that teacher's practice and content knowledge, with the ultimate goal of affecting student achievement. By its very nature, coaching requires effort from both the coach and teacher. Because instructional coaching is collaborative rather than directive, it will be most effective when teachers share responsibility for the outcomes. In the authors' work with coaching in schools, they have observed behaviors that make teachers effective consumers of coaching. They discuss strategies teachers can use to maximize coaching's benefits.

## Relevant Organizations

### **The Art of Coaching Teachers (Teacher blogs in Edweek.org)**

[http://blogs.edweek.org/teachers/coaching\\_teachers/2013/01/coaching\\_towards\\_common\\_core\\_s.html](http://blogs.edweek.org/teachers/coaching_teachers/2013/01/coaching_towards_common_core_s.html)

*From the website:* Elena Aguilar, an experienced K–12 educator, is a transformational leadership coach in the Oakland, Calif., school district. Her book *The Art of Coaching*, on transforming schools through instructional and leadership coaching, has been published by Jossey-Bass in spring 2013. *REL West Note:* The author writes blogs in Edweek.org on the subject of coaching teachers. The link we provided here leads to the page on “Coaching Towards Common Core State Standards.”

### **The Instructional Coaching Group (ICG)**

<http://instructionalcoaching.com>

*From the website:* The Instructional Coaching Group (ICG) is committed to one goal: that every student receives excellent instruction, every day, in every class. We partner with schools, districts, states/provinces, and nations to achieve this goal in three ways: (a) sharing high-impact teaching strategies, (b) proven instructional coaching practices to support implementation of those practices, and (c) system change strategies to ensure teachers understand, agree with, and are committed to implementing strategies.

- High-impact teaching strategies
- Instructional coaching
- System change – creating impact schools

We help organizations implement High-Impact Instructional Strategies, Instructional Coaching, and System Change strategies in three ways: Workshops to introduce the ideas, Consulting to help educators take control of implementation of the practices and strategies, and Coaching to help educational leaders and instructional coaches become fluent at each of the practices.

- Workshops
- Consulting to help educators take control of implementation
- Coaching to support leaders and instructional coaches

### **Kansas Coaching Project**

<http://instructionalcoach.org/>

*From the website:* The purpose of the Kansas Coaching Project is to study factors related to professional learning and how to improve academic outcomes for students through supports provided by instructional coaches. Instructional coaches are onsite professional developers who teach educators how to use evidence-based teaching practices and to support them in learning and applying these practices in a variety of educational settings. The Kansas Coaching Project has conducted a broad array of R&D initiatives in school districts in over 30 states and provinces. Instructional coaching variables and protocols that have been found to be most heavily related to

improved academic outcomes have been incorporated into an array of professional development workshops and institutes.

**Pennsylvania Institute for Instructional Coaching (PIIC)**

<http://www.pacoaching.org/index.php/piic-home>

*From the website:* PIIC's Mission is to support instructional coaching which helps teachers strengthen instructional practice, increase student engagement, and improve student learning. PIIC works to build teacher capacity as a means of increasing student engagement and improving student achievement.

## Methods

### Keywords and Search Strings Used in the Search

“instructional coaching” AND “frequency”; “instructional coaching” AND “duration” OR “duration of relationship”; “instructional coaching” AND “ratio”; “instructional coaching” AND “effective models”; “instructional coaches” and “effective feedback strategies”

### Search of Databases

ERIC, EBSCO, Google, and Google Scholar

### Additional Organizations Searched

Institute of Education Sciences; Doing What Works/What Works Clearinghouse; Center on Great Teachers and Leaders; Center on School Turnaround

### Criteria for Inclusion

When REL West staff review resources, they consider—among other things—four factors:

- **Date of the Publication:** The most current information is included, except in the case of nationally known seminal resources.
- **Source and Funder of the Report/Study/Brief/Article:** Priority is given to IES, nationally funded, and certain other vetted sources known for strict attention to research protocols.
- **Methodology:** Sources include randomized controlled trial studies, surveys, self-assessments, literature reviews, and policy briefs. Priority for inclusion generally is given to randomized controlled trial study findings, but the reader should note at least the following factors when basing decisions on these resources: numbers of participants (Just a few? Thousands?); selection (Did the participants volunteer for the study or were they chosen?); representation (Were findings generalized from a homogeneous or a diverse pool of participants? Was the study sample representative of the population as a whole?).
- **Existing Knowledge Base:** Although we strive to include vetted resources, there are times when the research base is limited or nonexistent. In these cases, we have included the best resources we could find, which may include newspaper articles, interviews with content specialists, organization websites, and other sources.

This memorandum is one in a series of quick-turnaround responses to specific questions posed by educators and policymakers in the Western region (Arizona, California, Nevada, Utah), which is served by the Regional Educational Laboratory West (REL West) at WestEd. This memorandum was prepared by REL West under a contract with the U.S. Department of Education’s Institute of Education Sciences (IES), Contract ED-IES-12-C-0002, administered by WestEd. Its content does not necessarily reflect the views or policies of IES or the U.S. Department of Education nor does mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement by the U.S. Government.