In the following report, Hanover Research presents best practices in instructional coaching, drawing on a review of the literature and the experiences of school districts noted for effective practices and positive outcomes.
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND KEY FINDINGS

INTRODUCTION

In this report, Hanover Research reviews instructional coaching, an approach designed to support teachers through continuous instructional improvement. The report examines a variety of definitions and models employed by researchers and school districts, and notes the evidence in favor of specific components of instructional coaching. As literature providing statistical evidence of effectiveness typically focuses on the instructional coaching model as a whole, rather than specific practices, the report not only draws on the available academic literature, but also on the experiences of other school districts to provide insight into more practical implementation concerns.

This report comprises the following three sections:

- **Section I: Introduction to the Instructional Coaching Model** draws upon secondary literature to establish a common understanding of the theory and framework of an effective instructional coaching program.

- **Section II: Best Practices in Instructional Coaching** reviews secondary literature and the design of instructional coaching programs at high-achieving school districts to identify specific practices associated with effective instructional coaching. This section includes a discussion of the roles and responsibilities of key actors in the model, allocation of coaches’ time and resources, and mechanisms for the supervision and evaluation of programs.

- **Section III: Profiles** presents practical examples from instructional coaching programs implemented at public K-12 school districts across the United States. Profiled school districts include Illinois’s Deerfield Public Schools, New York’s Ithaca City School District, and Alaska’s Juneau Public Schools.

KEY FINDINGS

- **An instructional coach is a dedicated professional development expert who works with teachers to increase student achievement through improved teacher effectiveness.** Instructional coaches provide job-embedded professional development, with an emphasis on inquiry-based learning, differentiated instruction, and collaborative practices.

- **Instructional coaches typically serve multiple roles within a district and a school,** including designing and modeling lessons for teachers, observing instruction and providing teachers feedback, facilitating professional development activities, analyzing student data, staying abreast of current research, and supporting school and district improvement plans. However, researchers and district leaders are explicit regarding the need to carefully and clearly delineate a coach’s responsibilities. In particular, multiple sources explain that it is important to
separate a coach’s role from teacher evaluation, as blurring these activities can undermine the effectiveness of an instructional coaching program.

- **Related to the above point, establishing trust-based relationships between coaches and teachers is a critical practice for successful instructional coaching.** In his widely-cited seven principles of instructional coaching, Jim Knight of the Kansas Coaching Project explains that the teacher-coach relationship should be one of equality, characterized by collaboration, authentic dialogue, and mutual development.

- **The available research literature offers evidence of positive effects on student achievement for both general instructional coaches and for literacy and mathematics coaches.** However, the number of studies examining the effects of coaching on student achievement is limited and observed gains appear dependent on the implementation of all of a model’s components as a cohesive whole, rather than on the presence of specific features.

- **With respect to supervision and evaluation of instructional coaches, the literature recommends the inclusion of coaches in the development of evaluation standards, forms, and processes** in order to establish buy-in among the coaches and develop an understanding of goals and expectations. Additionally, among the districts profiled in Section III of this report, we observe that districts may use a variety of tools to evaluate instructional coaches and coaching programs. For example, Deerfield Public Schools in Illinois uses a combination of coaching logs, teacher surveys, student data, and other resources to monitor and evaluate its instructional coaching programs’ effectiveness.
SECTION I: INTRODUCTION TO THE INSTRUCTIONAL COACHING MODEL

In this section, Hanover Research provides an introduction to the instructional coaching model for professional development. This section draws on secondary literature to discuss history and definitions of the model, foundations of effective coaching, and available evidence of the effectiveness of instructional coaching in the K-12 setting.

HISTORY AND DEFINITIONS

The concept of instructional coaching emerged in the early 1980s as a means of creating more iterative and formative modes of professional development in the K-12 context. In school settings, instructional coaching is often viewed as a mechanism to support teachers and help educators provide high quality teaching across the content areas, including math, English, and science. The model is often termed job-embedded professional development and is viewed by many educational researchers as more effective than “...drop-in or drive-by professional learning that offers no opportunity for collaboration and collective problem solving.”

Instructional coaches typically provide support to teachers on two levels: in-class support provided to individual teachers and group-focused professional development activities. Despite some variability in implementation, educational researchers and practitioners tend to employ reasonably consistent definitions of instructional coaching, generally emphasizing the model’s inquiry-based, differentiated, and collaborative nature. According to the Center for Early Childhood Professional Development (CECPD) at the University of Oklahoma, an instructional coach is an:

“...onsite professional development provider and change agent who uses differentiated coaching to increase teacher effectiveness by teaching educators how to successfully implement effective, research-based teaching techniques and practices.”

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The instructional coaching concept gradually developed from an in-situ peer mentoring structure proposed by Beverly Showers and Bruce Joyce in 1980.7 Evidence presented by Showers and Joyce suggested that “...modeling, practice under simulated conditions, and practice in the classroom, combined with feedback” provided the most productive design for professional development and training, especially for teachers attempting to master new pedagogical approaches and curricular models.8 Additional empirical research showed that members of more formalized peer-coaching groups tended to exhibit greater long-term retention of new educational strategies and were more likely to appropriately adapt to new teaching models in the future.9

The model was further developed in the early 2000s by Dr. Jim Knight, Director of the Kansas Coaching Project at The University of Kansas.10 Knight found that professional development activities were often undermined by external tensions and negative experiences with previous attempts by administrators to change instruction.11 However, by engaging participants in pairs and small groups and encouraging the development of relationships, Knight found that teachers were considerably more willing to fully participate in substantive training programs and more likely to translate new concepts into the classroom.12

FOUNDATIONS OF EFFECTIVE COACHING

A review of current literature reveals a number of consistent themes present in most instructional coaching programs. According to Brown University’s Annenberg Institute for School Reform, effective instructional coaching must involve a range of building-level actors, including teachers, administrators, and specialized educators.13 In this system, coaches facilitate and guide professional learning through a combination of individual and group meetings, classroom observation, and professional development workshops. Dedicated instructional coaches work collaboratively with administrators and teachers to improve curriculum, instruction, and assessment.14

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9 Ibid.
10 “Director of the Kansas Coaching Project.” Center for Research on Learning, The University of Kansas. http://instructionalcoach.org/about
14 Ibid.
Knight identifies seven principles that form the basis of the instructional coaching theoretical framework. First, the teacher and coach must establish a sense of equality within the relationship, placing equal value on the thoughts and beliefs of both parties. The coach must also ensure that the teacher maintains both choice and voice, allowing for the educator to maintain control over the techniques and methods employed. The professional learning mechanisms must also enable a natural and authentic dialogue, engaging the teacher in conversations regarding the application of pedagogy and encouraging reflection about what elements have been effective and which may be improved. The model should also include a praxis component, allowing teachers to apply new skills in real educational scenarios as they learn. Finally, the instructional coaching model is built upon reciprocity and defined by lateral flows of knowledge, allowing for mutual growth and development of both the teacher and coach during the process.

Additionally, the Kansas Coaching Project provides a practical process for the administration of the instructional coaching model (Figure 1.1). According to Knight, effective instructional coaching begins by forming a close and open working relationship between teacher and coach, and allows for a continuous cycle of learning and feedback regarding specific instructional approaches and techniques.

Figure 1.1: Knight’s Seven Components of Instructional Coaching

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COMPONENT</th>
<th>DESCRIPTION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Enrollment</td>
<td>The coach initiates a one-on-one interview prior to engaging in professional learning activities. The interview helps build common ground, develop interests and concerns, and establish a rapport between teacher and coach.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaborative Planning</td>
<td>Teacher and coach collaboratively develop a practical plan for the implementation of a new teaching practice, and build a rubric to help guide observation of the lesson’s delivery.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modeling the Lessons</td>
<td>The coach delivers the planned lesson in the teacher’s classroom, while the teacher observes and records notes on the observation guide.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher-Directed Post-Conference</td>
<td>Immediately following the coach’s model lesson, the teacher facilitates a collaborative and constructive conversation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observing the Lesson</td>
<td>The pair then reverses roles, with the teacher delivering the planned lesson and incorporating elements learned during the previous three steps. During the lesson, the coach records observations on the rubric.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaborative Data Exploration</td>
<td>Immediately following the teacher’s lesson, teacher and coach discuss the lesson, incorporating data from the coach’s observation rubric.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continued Support</td>
<td>The coach provides continuous support in the development of lessons and pedagogical techniques, until both parties feel recognize mastery of the practice.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Knight and Cornett

16 Ibid. pp. 32-33.
18 Ibid.
EVIDENCE OF EFFECTIVENESS

Despite widespread acceptance among educational practitioners, few scientifically-rigorous studies have attempted to assess the efficacy of the instructional coach model as it relates to teacher improvement and student achievement. Furthermore, the available literature often does not provide statistical evidence to confirm specific best practices and tends to discuss models with too little diversity to compare the traits of successful and unsuccessful practices. Nevertheless, this subsection provides a brief overview of the current base of research regarding instructional coaching, emphasizing empirically valid scientific studies.

TEACHER EFFECTIVENESS

Evidence presented by the Kansas Coaching Project suggests a number of positive impacts for teachers involved in professional development activities as part of an instructional coaching model. Notably, research reveals that at least 85 percent of teachers participating in the Project’s Pathways to Success instructional coaching model, as well as a similar model sponsored by the Maryland State Department of Education, titled Passport to Success, had incorporated new and effective instructional practices in their classrooms within the first six weeks. Furthermore, evidence suggests that teachers who participate in instructional coaching transfer new pedagogies in the classroom with higher implementation fidelity, improving student performance by up to 13 percentage points.19

Another article published by the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics discusses a number of studies identifying a positive correlation between participation in an instructional coaching program and improved instructional practices.20 Two independent studies conducted by Campbell (1996) and Race, Ho, and Bower (2002) found that teachers participating in instructional coaching programs were significantly more likely to incorporate new instructional techniques into their classrooms and generally employed greater variety in their instructional methods. Similarly, Becker (2001) and McGatha (2008) found that mathematics teachers participating in an instructional coaching professional development model tended to:21

- emphasize problem-solving and analytical thinking rather than skill-based instruction;
- develop lessons and exercises that were more aligned with student needs;
- encouraged students to think through and articulate problems; and
- focus on a more holistic understanding of the discipline.

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21 Ibid.
Other evidence suggests that instructional coaching may be a less resource-intensive means of improving teacher performance and engagement than traditional professional development. In a rigorous, year-long study of 2nd and 5th grade teachers, Van Keer and Verhaeghe (2005) showed that 15-hours of contact time in an instructional coaching model produced results similar to that of 35-hours of contact time in traditional professional development activities. Additional evidence presented by Sailors and Price (2010) suggests that coaching is an effective means of improving performance for teachers in 2nd through 8th grade, and is associated with positive results in a wide-range of academic subjects including reading, language arts, science, and social studies.22

**STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT AND ENGAGEMENT**

In what is perhaps the most comprehensive study of the effects of instructional coaching on student achievement, researchers from the University of Maryland examined the performance of nearly 25,000 3rd, 4th, and 5th grade students on standardized mathematics assessments over a three-year period.23 The research design included five elementary schools across the Commonwealth of Virginia, including schools classified by the National Center for Education Statistics as urban, suburban, and rural, and compared the performance of students in an experimental group within the school with those of students who were not taught by a teacher working with an instructional coach. Research results indicate statistically significant, positive effects on student achievement over time. Interestingly, the authors noted that positive impacts were not evident after the first year of implementation, but rather “...emerged as knowledgeable coaches gained experience and as a school’s instructional and administrative staffs learned and worked together.”24

Another study conducted by researchers at The Ohio State University identified positive results for students taught by teachers in a mathematics instructional coaching program.25 The study examined the performance of 3rd and 4th grade students in 34 urban, suburban, and rural schools in Ohio that participated in a state-wide pilot project of the Mathematics Coaching Program (MCP) model.26 Preliminary pre- and post-test results identified modest gains in mathematics content knowledge over a single year of implementation. Similarly, the study found that students in MCP-schools scored approximately three percentage points higher on the mathematics section of a state-wide standardized test than their non-MCP peers.27

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24 Ibid.
Positive effects have been reached beyond mathematics, as well. For example, in a long-term study launched by the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation, five Corpus Christi, Texas middle schools that participated in an instructional coaching initiative found that between 22 percent and 35 percent of students increased their reading comprehension scores on the state test by more than three grade levels within a period of only three years. Overall, the literature finds positive gains in student achievement for both general content coaches and for coaches focused specifically on literacy or mathematics.

As noted above, while the available research literature generally treats instructional coaching programs as a whole, rather than offering evidence of the effectiveness of specific components that make up these programs, education experts and district leaders offer insight into what they consider best practices in instructional coaching. In the next section, we explore such practices, followed by an examination of instructional programs featuring these practices in specific school districts in Section III.


SECTION II: BEST PRACTICES IN INSTRUCTIONAL COACHING

In this section, Hanover Research reviews best practices in instructional coaching according to education experts and district leaders. In particular, the section includes a summary of the roles and responsibilities of coaches, administrators, and teachers in instructional coaching programs, a discussion of the allocation of coaches’ time and resources, and mechanisms employed in the evaluation of instructional coaching programs.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

This subsection presents a discussion of the roles and responsibilities of key actors in the instructional coaching model. Information presented in this section is drawn from pertinent secondary research from leading educational experts, as well as the practices and experiences of successful school districts such as Spokane Public Schools and Fairfax County Public Schools.

INSTRUCTIONAL COACHES

The primary goal of an instructional coach is to improve classroom instruction and increase student achievement.30 In daily practice, instructional coaches are responsible for helping teachers adopt new instructional practices, and ensuring effective and consistent implementation of these practices in the classroom. Instructional coaches perform a variety of tasks within the educational setting, including meeting with teachers, modeling lessons and content delivery, observing and gathering classroom data, and facilitating learning teams.31 A review of professional standards established by education associations and school districts around the country identified several commons responsibilities for instructional coaches, including:32

- Design and teach model lessons for teachers’ observation;
- Guide teachers in effective lesson development, instruction, and assessment;
- Provide in-depth, sustained professional development;
- Facilitate workshops, inter-classroom visitations, and opportunities for reflection;

- Discuss techniques with teachers and support teachers in self-improvement efforts.

While coaching experts often note that instructional coaches “wear a lot of hats” within the school, there is a growing consensus that creating more distinct and focused roles and responsibilities may benefit both the coach and his or her teachers. Wren and Vallejo (2009), for example, note that “…it is appropriate to expect coaches to take on a few different roles and responsibilities as instructional leaders, but those roles should be relatively few, very clear, and highly prioritized.”33 A guidance document published by Washington State’s Spokane Public Schools (SPS), for example, specifies which roles and responsibilities do not fall under a coach’s purview. Notably, SPS specifies that instructional coaches should not be involved in teacher evaluations or provide information used in teacher evaluations, serve as substitute teachers, or take primary responsibility for classroom instruction.34

TEACHERS

Despite strong evidence of its efficacy, teachers have often viewed professional development requirements with some resentment. A rigorous qualitative assessment of teacher perceptions conducted by Knight revealed that professional development is often hampered by sentiments that professional development is impractical, an additional unwanted task, and emblematic of the top-down decision-making employed at the district level. Given the instructional coaching model’s heavy emphasis on collaboration and the lateral sharing of knowledge, however, an effective coaching program requires a high level of buy-in from teachers.35

The main responsibility of teachers in the instructional coaching model is to be open-minded and active learners.36 Accordingly, instructional coaches and school administrators must ensure that teachers’ voices are heard within the coaching program and that activities and lessons are structured to align with teachers’ needs and interests. Furthermore, school administrators need to clearly emphasize the benefits of participating in coaching programs to help create clarity regarding the role of the coach.37

Citing the importance of a close and trusting teacher-coach relationship within the instructional coaching model, Spokane Public Schools specifies that teachers are responsible for developing their own learning goals and for being active participants within the

professional learning community.\textsuperscript{38} Furthermore, SPS notes that the freedom associated with participation in instructional coaching comes with added accountability; as such, teachers involved in instructional coaching professional development are required to take an active role in their school’s improvement plan, respond to all professional learning surveys, and establish professional rapport and collaborative relationships with their colleagues.\textsuperscript{39}

\textbf{Administrators}

The relationship between coaches and building administrators – especially the principal – has been shown to be a critical indicator of the success of the instructional coaching model.\textsuperscript{40} The influence of administrators is widely felt throughout the instructional coaching program, from the selection and hiring of qualified coaches to the establishment of a clear and coherent framework for professional development. To a large extent, the ultimate success or failure of an instructional coaching program can be attributed to the decisions and actions of building-level administrators.\textsuperscript{41} The following are recommended strategies for administrators when implementing instructional coaching programs:\textsuperscript{42}

- Select coaches comfortable with conflict, resistance, and multiple demands on their time.
- Be clear on the mission, role, and development of site-based coaches.
- Help coaches have a greater impact by focusing them on one or two goals within the school's overall mission.
- Get external support on the content, process, and implementation of coaching from critical friends such as school district administrators (long-term) or outside consultants (short-term).
- Create ways to collaborate. Constructive feedback between critical friends and staff developers helps create a supportive environment.
- Offer new coaches guidance from mentor staff developers, including teacher leaders or veteran staff developers.

While there is widespread agreement that administrators must offer professional support for instructional coaches, more nuanced elements of the principal-coach relationship are the subject of some debate within the literature base.\textsuperscript{43} For example, many educational practitioners believe that principals and coaches should have limited interaction in order to prevent perceptions of collusion in teacher evaluations that could potentially undermine

\textsuperscript{39} Ibid. p. 13
\textsuperscript{41} Wren, S. and Vallejo, D. Op cit. p. 3.
\textsuperscript{43} Wren, S. and Vallejo, D. Op cit. p. 3.
the coaching model. While such advice seems primarily informed by anecdote, rather than empirical evidence, it is representative of the philosophical basis of the coaching model, and the importance of integrity in the maintenance of professional relationships.

There is also a general consensus within the body of literature that school administrators must ensure adequate time and resources for instructional coaches’ professional development activities. While many coaches have a wealth of classroom experience teaching students in the K-12 setting, effectively teaching and interacting with their peers may require different skills and techniques. As such, administrators need to ensure that their candidates are appropriately qualified for the unique challenges of instructional coaching, and then create a system of professional development that further develops their abilities and allows them to stay up-to-date with current research and practices.

**Specialty Coaches**

The roles and responsibilities of content area instructional coaches are very similar to those of instructional coaches in general, albeit with increased responsibility for delivering greater content-specific knowledge and pedagogies. Literacy coaches, in particular, have been noted to have a unique challenge, as they possess the skills to help teachers improve student literacy across the entire spectrum of K-12 education. Accordingly, the International Reading Association’s literacy coaching standards address the need to collaborate with teachers in a variety of fields. The evidence of a link between instructional coaches and increased student achievement has been strongest in studies focused on the effects of literacy and mathematics coaches, specifically.

**Allocating Time and Resources**

With limited resources available for professional development, districts must carefully assess how many coaches they can afford and how these coaches should be deployed to maximize their impact. While many districts attempt to provide all schools with at least some instructional coaching time, researchers Barbara Neufeld and Dana Roper warn that spreading coaching resources too thinly may ultimately limit the model’s impact. Arrangements where coaches work within a school for only one or two days a week tend to lack the continuity required to build formative teacher-coach bonds and create an impractical workload for coaches. Instead, most practitioners suggest that a coach is

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embedded in a single school for at least four days each week, with a fifth day reserved for preparation, data analysis, and personal professional development.\textsuperscript{52}

Researchers with the Kansas Coaching Project note that the most basic way to increase the effectiveness of a coaching program is to increase the amount of time coaches spend interacting with and guiding teachers.\textsuperscript{53} Therefore, beyond the number of days when an instructional coach is embedded in a given school, the more detailed allocation of time spent on various activities is an important consideration. Instructional coaches at Fairfax County Public Schools, for example, spend approximately 60 percent of their time working with teams of teachers, 30 percent working with teachers individually, and 10 percent working toward their own professional development (Figure 2.1).\textsuperscript{54} Similarly, in two of the districts we profile in Section III (Ithaca City School District and Juneau School District), instructional coaches spend at least 50 percent of their working directly with teachers.

![Figure 2.1: Allocation of Coaching Time, FCPS](http://www.fcps.edu/pla/opp/ic/2011_12/TimeAllocation.pdf)

In order to maximize coaching resources, many schools and districts have implemented group-based instructional coaching models. A review of current research and district coaching guidelines suggests that using group-coaching techniques in tandem with individual coaching is a common practice throughout the K-12 context.\textsuperscript{56} For example, the “Collaborative Coaching and Learning” model developed by Boston Public Schools (BPS) divides teachers into small teams who collaboratively decide which instructional strategies they would like to further explore.\textsuperscript{57} The coaching model then uses three unique elements –

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\textsuperscript{52} Ibid. p. 20.

\textsuperscript{53} Knight, J. “Chapter 2: Instructional Coaching.” Op cit. p. 50.

\textsuperscript{54} “Program Profiles: Instructional Coaching Program.” Fairfax County Public Schools. Op cit.


http://www.fcps.edu/pla/ope/docs/2007-08/cic_yr1_appendices.pdf


\textsuperscript{57} “Before you Watch PD with Purpose.” Boston Public Schools.

inquiry, lab site, and follow up — during which the coach interacts with the teachers in
groups and individually to provide guidance on the selected pedagogies (Figure 2.2). The
BPS model allows the district to maximize its coaching resources, while ensuring sufficient
teacher-coach contact time and creating the opportunity for more advanced collaborative
learning between teachers.

**Figure 2.2: Core Coaching Elements, BPS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ELEMENT</th>
<th>DESCRIPTION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inquiry</td>
<td>With the coach, the team meets weekly to review and discuss readings and research on their course of study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lab Site</td>
<td>Each week, the teachers and coach take turns observing and teaching in a host classroom — using strategies they have studied in their inquiry — and analyzing the strategy’s effectiveness in a debrief after each session. Each lab site begins with a pre-conference in which the team reviews the purpose of the lesson and agrees on what to watch for.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Follow-Up</td>
<td>The coach and/or members of the teacher team make visits to individual classrooms, and further discuss the lesson’s effectiveness.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Boston Public Schools

The existing literature base provides little information regarding the optimal size for instructiona
coaching cohorts. A review of district-level documents reveals that cohort size is
generally determined by the district, and is likely influenced by a number of budgetary and resource considerations. In a research setting, Knight and Cornett assume a ratio of one
coach per school, though the authors note that available resources are likely to vary widely depending on the setting. Similarly, researchers with the Alliance for Excellent Education recommend a staffing ratio of approximately one coach for every 20 classroom teachers. In practice, instructional coaches appear to be more sparsely allocated. The instructional coaching program at Fairfax County Public Schools, for example, currently employs 69 elementary coaches, 14 middle school coaches, and seven high school coaches, for an average of one coach for every two school sites.

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59 Text reproduced verbatim from: Ibid.
63 Note, however, that FCPS still places coaches in specific schools, commenting that it has 85 schools (of 196 sites) participating in its instructional coaching program. Instructional coaches assist schools without such personnel by designing and leading professional development activities on their behalf. See: “Program Profiles: Instructional Coaching Program.” Fairfax County Public Schools. Op. cit.
SUPervision AND Evaluation

STANDARDS

According to Knight, evaluation is a primary driver of continuous school improvement.64 While systematic evaluation has become pervasive in most aspects of the U.S. public education system, several researchers note that most instructional coaching programs tend to lack effective assessment indicators and mechanisms for documenting the program’s impact.65 One difficulty stems from the fact that many districts do not have personnel with extensive previous experience acting as coaches. To address this issue, Knight suggests that districts include coaches in the creation of guidelines, standards, and tools for use in the evaluation process. This approach helps ensure that all stakeholders are in agreement on the expectations for coaches, while also encouraging buy-in and providing an excellent opportunity for coaches to develop a better understanding of their objectives and goals.66

Given the nature of instructional coaching, the evaluation process requires different standards, forms, and processes than typically employed by districts and schools. The International Reading Association, National Council of Teachers of English, National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, National Science Teachers Association, and National Council for the Social Studies have collaborated to determine appropriate standards for literacy coaches (Figure 2.2).67 While developed specifically for literacy coaches, the standards could be adapted for coaches engaged in other disciplines. The International Reading Association also notes that the standards represent an ideal that few coaches will initially meet, and that it may “...take two to three years for most [new coaches] to develop the full complement of coaching skills.”68

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standard 1: Skillful Collaborators - Content area literacy coaches are skilled collaborators who function effectively in middle school and/or high school settings.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Standard 2: Skillful Job-Embedded Coaches - Content area literacy coaches are skilled instructional coaches for secondary teachers in the core content areas of English language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard 3: Skillful Evaluators Of Literacy Needs - Content area literacy coaches are skilled evaluators of literacy needs within various subject areas and are able to collaborate with secondary school leadership teams and teachers to interpret and use assessment data to inform instruction.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard 4: Skillful Instructional Strategists - Content area literacy coaches are accomplished middle and high school teachers who are skilled in developing and implementing instructional strategies to improve academic literacy in the specific content area.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: The International Reading Association69

66 Ibid. pp. 53-54.
68 Ibid. p. 5.
69 Ibid.
Fairfax County Public Schools has developed standards in five critical areas – Planning and Assessment, Instruction, Learning Environment, Human Relations and Communication Skills, and Professionalism – to guide the assessment of instructional coaches. Structurally similar to the International Reading Association’s professional guidelines, and based on the work of professional development experts Joellen Killion and Cindy Harrison, the FCPS standards emphasize the coach’s role as a guide and mentor to the teacher. The standards also effectively incorporate the fundamental aspects of exemplary coaching, and creating the expectation that coaches will support all professional learning in the district and articulate their efforts with other professional development activities, while also engaging in instructional coach training.70

Offering a concrete example of an evaluation tool, Spokane Public Schools published its performance evaluation report template for instructional coaches on the district website.71 The form is used to assess coaches according to eight broad dimensions (e.g., instructional skills, classroom management, knowledge of subject matter, etc.), each of which include more detailed expectations of a coach. Coaches are assessed using a three-point scale of “Satisfactory,” “Requires Improvement,” and “Unsatisfactory.”72 The figure below provides an illustration of expectations associated with the “instructional skills” dimension. Note that this only represents a sample of the district’s expectations, as the full form is too extensive to reproduce here.

Figure 2.4: Spokane Public Schools – Performance Evaluation Report for Instructional Coaches

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INSTRUCTIONAL SKILLS</th>
<th>(A COMPETENT LEVEL OF KNOWLEDGE AND SKILL IN DESIGNING AND CONDUCTING AN INSTRUCTIONAL EXPERIENCE)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) Planning Model Lessons and Assisting Teachers:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Establishes immediate and long-range objectives that align with grade level expectations and district curriculum guides.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Prepares plans to meet instructional objectives that are aligned with district curriculum guides and grade level expectations.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Considers abilities, interests, prior knowledge, and present performance of students in planning.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) Teaching Model Lessons and Assisting Teachers:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Utilizes teaching practices and strategies that are consistent with the selected objectives and grade level expectations.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Makes provisions for differences in individual needs of the students.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Provides classroom instruction and activities that align with the maturity and the attention span of the students</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Spokane Public Schools.73

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70 “Standards of Performance, Guidelines, and Expectations (Instructional Coaches).” Fairfax County Public Schools. www.fcps.edu/hr/epd/evaluations/docs/perfexpectinstcoaches.pdf
71 Note that the form was last updated in 2007 but appears to be the most current available on the district website.
73 Excerpt from source. Ibid., p. 2.
**FREQUENCY**

While the need for thorough evaluations is clear, the appropriate frequency of evaluation is not as well-defined in the literature. The evaluation form for Spokane Public Schools presents the options for evaluation type as annual, 90-day, or other.\(^74\) The District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS) offers a more extensive discussion of the frequency and logistics of evaluation for instructional coaches. The district assesses proficiency in instructional coaching standards four times over the course of the year. The coach’s administrator conducts two assessments, the first by December 20\(^{th}\) and the second by June 10\(^{th}\). A representative from the DCPS Office of Curriculum and Instruction conducts the other two assessments, the first by February 15\(^{th}\) and the second by June 10\(^{th}\). The administrator observes the coach for at least 30 minutes during each cycle, while the coach conducts a debriefing with a teacher, helps set goals or analyze data with a teacher, or implements support in a classroom. The district publishes its standards and ratings methodology for instructional coaches online.\(^75\)


SECTION III: PROFILES

In this section, Hanover Research presents profiles of the instructional coaching programs at three school districts: Illinois’s Deerfield Public Schools, New York’s Ithaca City School District, and Alaska’s Juneau School District. While in general, evidence of the effectiveness of each district’s instructional coaching model was unavailable, in selecting these profiles, we focused on identifying districts that small to medium in size and offered detailed descriptions of their instructional coaching programs on their district website. Each profile seeks to emphasize elements of model design, roles and responsibilities of various actors, evaluation criteria, and data collection tools.

DEERFIELD PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Deerfield Public Schools (DPS) is a small, suburban school district in the Chicago Metropolitan Area enrolling more than 3,000 students in six elementary, middle, and secondary schools.76 DPS is a consistently high-achieving district, with U.S. News and World Report currently ranking Deerfield High School as the sixth-best school in Illinois.77 DPS uses a proprietary instructional coaching model – known as Student-Centered Instructional Coaching and developed by Diane Sweeney – that places particular emphasis on creating better student outcomes through improved instructional methodologies in the classroom.78

DPS has established two clear and concise goals for its Student-Centered Instructional Coaching program: i) that benchmarks for student achievement are clearly elaborated and rooted in standards and curriculum, and ii) that school personnel work collaboratively to ensure that these goals are met. District administrators work closely with school-based personnel to communicate this message and ensure that all of the district’s educators understand that coaching is a means of improving student achievement, not evaluating teacher performance. Key practices in the DPS model include:79

- Setting a goal for student learning that is based on the Common Core Standards;
- Analyzing student work to determine where students are as learners;
- Planning and co-teaching using effective teaching practices;
- Scheduling coaching based on 4-6 week-long coaching cycles;
- Documenting student and teacher learning across the coaching cycle; and
- Working in partnership with the school leader.

79 Bulleted items reproduced verbatim from: Ibid. p. 2.
After briefly outlining Knight’s seven principles of instructional coaching (e.g., equality, choice, voice, praxis, etc.), discussed in Section I of this report, DPS provides a clear overview of the roles of coaches, principals and teachers in the Student-Centered Instructional Coaching model. With respect to the instructional coach, the district identifies nine key roles, depicted in the figure below. As the figure illustrates, the district’s guidance is well-aligned with many of the points raised in our earlier discussion of best practices, including expectations surrounding the coach’s own professional development.

**Figure 3.1: Role of the Instructional Coach – DPS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ROLE/PURPOSE</th>
<th>EXAMPLES OF SPECIFIC PRACTICES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Supporter of Student Learning:</strong></td>
<td>▪ Setting standards-based goals for student learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To design instruction that focuses on the diverse needs of students</td>
<td>▪ Co-planning to design differentiated instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▪ Co-teaching to implement differentiated instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▪ Designing formative assessments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Supporter of Effective Instruction:</strong></td>
<td>▪ Modeling instruction to demonstrate effective practices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To support the implementation of effective instructional strategies</td>
<td>▪ Co-planning with a focus on developing a robust repertoire of pedagogical practices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▪ Providing descriptive feedback based on a teacher requested observation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Curriculum or Content Facilitator</strong></td>
<td>▪ Unpacking the Common Core Standards to create learning targets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To promote implementation of the Common Core Standards through adopted curricula</td>
<td>▪ Increasing teacher content knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▪ Facilitating a better understanding of the structure of the written, taught, and tested curriculum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Data Coach</strong></td>
<td>▪ Collaborating with teachers to analyze formative and summative student achievement data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To facilitate conversations using data to drive instructional decisions</td>
<td>▪ Assisting teachers with the use of data to improve student learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Facilitator for Change</strong></td>
<td>▪ Fostering a safe, trusting environment for teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To engage teachers in reflective thinking while looking at their own instructional practices critically and analytically</td>
<td>▪ Introducing alternatives and refinements for teacher instructional practices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Learner</strong></td>
<td>▪ Engaging in professional development opportunities and professional reading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To engage in continuous learning in order to keep current</td>
<td>▪ Practicing and reflecting about what is learned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Professional Learning Facilitator</strong></td>
<td>▪ Providing professional development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To design and facilitate professional learning activities</td>
<td>▪ Facilitating other forms of professional development (e.g., teacher-led PD, district-led PD)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Resource Provider</strong></td>
<td>▪ Identifying instructional and assessment resources requested by teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To identify a variety of resources to enhance classroom instruction and student achievement</td>
<td>▪ Sharing research and instructional best practices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Partner with the School and District Leadership</strong></td>
<td>▪ Involving stakeholders in the implementation of the School Improvement Plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To support and communicate the school and district initiatives with the school community</td>
<td>▪ Connecting with community stakeholders by sharing instructional practices that impact students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▪ Acting as a strong advocate for student learning</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Deerfield Public Schools.""
In line with our earlier discussion, DPS comments on what “the role of the coach does not include.” Examples of such roles beyond the scope of the coach’s purview include evaluating teachers, acting as a substitute teacher, being permanently assigned as the direct instructor for a group of students, and performing administrative tasks that are not directly related to the coach’s primary responsibilities. With respect to the first point, the district explains that it is critical teachers “do not feel that they are being evaluated by someone serving as their coach,” emphasizing that the instructional coach is a peer of the teachers.

DPS has developed a rigorous methodology for collecting and analyzing data related to the program’s impact. The district uses five different instruments to gather data related to teacher satisfaction and student performance. First, coaches and teachers use a Results-Based Coaching Tool to evaluate student learning and instructional practices over the course of a four-to-six week coaching cycle. Coaches and teachers also collaborate to develop Formative Assessments and Tools for Planning Lessons, helping monitor student achievement against predetermined learning targets and adapt lessons to the Common Core State Standards. Finally, coaches keep detailed Coaching Logs to form a qualitative record of the program’s impact, while teachers take an End-of-Cycle Survey to gather wider input regarding program efficacy.

**ITHACA CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT**

Ithaca City School District (ICSD) is a small, urban school district in Upstate New York enrolling nearly 5,500 students across 12 elementary, middle, and secondary schools. In spring 2013, ICSD administrators established a formal partnership with the Cornell Institute for Public Affairs (CIPA) at Cornell University to create an instructional coaching framework. Informed primarily by a review of the current literature base, CIPA researchers developed a comprehensive implementation, evaluation, and communications plan for ICSD’s new instructional coaching program, all with the ultimate goal of developing tangible improvement of teaching and learning and student performance across the district.

Citing various budgetary and roll-out concerns, ICSD elected to pilot the program in a limited number of schools during the first year of implementation, before further disseminating the model in subsequent years. While this type of piloting is generally advisable for educational reform measures, it does present some limitations with regard to the information presented in this report. First, since the program has just completed its first year of piloting, no information regarding the model’s efficacy is currently available. Secondly, information related to proposed changes in the implementation plan based on first-year data cannot be assessed. Nevertheless, given the publicly available information on

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81 Ibid., p. 8.
the district’s program, as well as its partnership with a well-respected institution of higher education, we believe the ICSD example is instructive.

The ICSD plan calls for coaches to work with teachers in six-to-eight week cycles, with each cycle including planning, co-taught lessons, lesson debriefing, and post-observation conferences, similar to those presented in Figure 1.1 of this report (Knight’s seven components of instructional coaching). ICSD coaches typically work with between six and eight teachers each cycle, allowing for interaction with up to 56 teachers each academic year. ICSD coaches are also required to document a host of data associated with each teacher, including student test scores, to help determine where the relationship has been successful and where the teacher and coach can continue to improve performance.

The ICSD plan clearly establishes roles and responsibilities for each of the critical stakeholders involved in the instructional coaching model. Before the school year begins, instructional coaches perform a needs assessment to develop an understanding of the critical areas for development at their specific site, and create a generalized monthly schedule for the administration of coaching activities. Coaches then work to design a support model, including prospective data sources, and begin to communicate their plan with teachers and administrators throughout the school. Instructional coaches employed by ICSD also have an obligation to take an active role within the district’s various professional learning communities (PLCs), and are expected to attend PLC meetings on at least a weekly basis.

Instructional coaches at ICSD also typically meet with building-level administrators approximately once a month to check-in on teacher and student progress. While regular communication between coach and principal is required, the nature of the relationship is fairly open-ended and typically determined by mutual agreement between the two stakeholders. Informed largely by Spokane Public Schools’ model and sharing similarities with Deerfield Public Schools’ model discussed previously, ICSD suggests clear roles for all stakeholders in the instructional coaching program, as elaborated in Figure 3.2 below.

**Figures 3.2: Roles and Responsibilities of Stakeholders, ICSD**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ROLE</th>
<th>DESCRIPTION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Coaches</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom Supporter</td>
<td>Providing descriptive feedback based on teacher requested observation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instructional Supporter</td>
<td>Building teacher capacity by working with intervention groups for short periods of time in elementary classrooms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum Specialist</td>
<td>Promoting implementation of state standards through adopted curricula</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Coach</td>
<td>Facilitating conversations using data to drive instructional decisions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resource and School Leader</td>
<td>Identifying a variety of resources to enhance classroom instruction and student achievement</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The ICSD plan also specifies the amount of time instructional coaches should allocate to each of their responsibilities. In general, coaches are expected to spend approximately 50 percent of their time working in a classroom setting with teachers, working on co-planning, skills demonstrations, co-teaching, facilitating peer observations, and collecting data. Coaches are then expected to spend 15 percent of their time working for teachers, including locating resources and planning/prepping for professional development. Finally, coaches should spend approximately 35 percent of their time working to further develop an instructional coaching toolkit and completing other necessary tasks, such as liaising with administrators and attending staff meetings.

**JUNEAU SCHOOL DISTRICT**

Juneau School District (JSD) is a small, urban school district in southern Alaska enrolling more than 5,000 students across 14 elementary, middle, and secondary schools. JDS is among the state’s highest achieving districts, with the district’s largest secondary school, Juneau-Douglas High School, currently ranked as the fourth-best school in the state. As part of the district’s 2010-2014 Strategic Plan, JSD established an instructional coaching program to help improve instruction and intervention strategies, increase implementation fidelity of research-based methods, and expand the impact of professional development activities.

Drawing upon research by professional development experts Joellen Killion and Cindy Harrison, JSD outlines a number of critical roles and responsibilities for instructional coaches. Specifically, the JSD instructional coaching strategy calls for coaches to act as

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ROLE</th>
<th>DESCRIPTION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teachers</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instructor</td>
<td>Reflecting, refining, and implementing effective instructional practices to increase student achievement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning Partner</td>
<td>Engaging in professional collaborative relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessor</td>
<td>Participating in data conversations that influence instructional decisions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Principals</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communicator</td>
<td>Building understanding of the interconnectedness of the coaching model school improvement plans, and district initiatives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilitator</td>
<td>Collaboratively planning and coordinating professional learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instructional Leader</td>
<td>Supporting coaches and teachers in the coaching model</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Ithaca City School District.

“Catalysts for Change” within the schools, motivating teachers to explore improved pedagogical techniques and helping teachers transfer their learning into the classroom. The district also emphasizes the importance of the coach-teacher relationship, noting that the coach must act as a mentor and friend in order to maximize the program’s impact. However, similar to Deerfield Public Schools and other districts discussed in this report, JDS also specifies several areas in which instructional coaches are not expected to participate, namely that coaches are not to be used as sources of information for teacher assessments and are not expected to work directly with students outside of lesson modeling.

During the fall of 2011, JDS instructional coaches spent approximately **50 percent of their time engaged in classroom observations and providing direct instructional assistance to individual teachers**. Coaches spent an additional 40 percent of their time providing assistance regarding available resources, co-teaching lessons, assisting in the development of curriculum, and lesson planning. This time was further divided into different forms of support for individual teachers and groups of teachers, as described in Figure 3.3 below.

**Figure 3.3: Instructional Coach Roles, JSD**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Working with Individual Teachers</th>
<th>Working with Groups of Teachers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assists in lesson planning</td>
<td>Uses data to align instruction and assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Models lesson delivery</td>
<td>Helps organize colleague observations for teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assists teachers to learn new strategies</td>
<td>Facilitates grade-level and department meetings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observes and debriefs lessons</td>
<td>Facilitates study groups and PD workshops</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentors</td>
<td>Reads and provides staff with targeted research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helps find resources</td>
<td>Introduces lesson study to teams</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Juneau School District.

Currently in its second year of implementation, JSD has placed particular emphasis on instructional coaches’ involvement in a range of district-wide school improvement programs, including Positive Behavior Interventions and Support (PBIS), AVID, Institute for Research-based Instructional Strategies (IRIS), Balanced Math, and Big Five Reading.87

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PROJECT EVALUATION FORM

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