Leading Student-Centered Coaching

This book is dedicated to the principal and coach teams who work tirelessly each day in service of learning.

Leading Student-Centered Coaching

Building Principal and Coach Partnerships

Diane Sweeney

Ann Mausbach

CORWIN
A SAGE Publishing Company

CORWIN
A SAGE Publishing Company

FOR INFORMATION:

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

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

SAGE Publications India Pvt. Ltd.
B 1/I 1 Mohan Cooperative Industrial Area
Mathura Road, New Delhi 110 044
India

SAGE Publications Asia-Pacific Pte. Ltd.
3 Church Street
#10-04 Samsung Hub
Singapore 049483

Printed in the United States of America

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Sweeney, Diane, author. | Mausbach, Ann T., author.

Title: Leading student-centered coaching / Diane R. Sweeney and Ann Mausbach.

Description: Thousand Oaks, California : Corwin, a SAGE Company, [2018] | Includes bibliographical references.

Identifiers: LCCN 2018008232 | ISBN 9781544320557 (pbk. : alk. paper)

Subjects: LCSH: Mentoring in education. | Teachers—Training of. | School improvement programs.

Classification: LCC LB1731.4 .S867 2018 | DDC 370.102—dc23
LC record available at https://lccn.loc.gov/2018008232

This book is printed on acid-free paper.

Executive Editor: Dan Alpert
Associate Editor: Lucas Schleicher
Editorial Assistant: Mia Rodriguez
Production Editor: Andrew Olson
Copy Editor: Deanna Noga
Typesetter: C&M Digitals (P) Ltd.
Proofreader: Dennis W. Webb
Indexer: Judy Hunt
Cover Designer: Anupama Krishnan

18 19 20 21 22 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Contents

Acknowledgments

There is nothing more powerful than a dedicated school leader. These leaders guide their school toward serving every student. They do this while also nurturing each staff member to grow and develop. We have been fortunate to work with, and learn from, many such leaders. We couldn't have written this without them. They live in the pages of this book.

While there are too many to name, we'd like to acknowledge and thank Kim Kazmierczak, Garry Milbourn, Mark Schuldt, Amy Glime, and Greg James. These principals have informed the practices that we shared in this book. We work with many dedicated coaches as well. The team from Nido de Aguilas in Santiago, Chile, informed our work on creating powerful principal coach partnerships. Their work is also reflected in this story.

Just as it takes a village to raise a child, it takes an amazing team to write a book. We have been fortunate to work with Dan Alpert and the Corwin staff who continually provide guidance and support. We also benefited from feedback from our critical friends at Diane Sweeney Consulting: Leanna Harris, Karen Taylor, and Julie Wright. They provided direction and clarity throughout the writing process.

While it couldn't go without saying, we can't omit a thanks to the people in our lives who motivate and inspire us the most: our husbands and children. Thanks to Dan, Quinn, Eva, Tim, Jack, and Mark. Your support and presence in our lives gives our work meaning.

PUBLISHER'S ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Corwin gratefully acknowledges the contributions of the following reviewers:

Amanda Brueggeman
Literary Coach
Wentzville School District
Wentzville, MO

Timothy S. Grieves, PhD
Chief Administrator
Northwest Area Education Agency
Sioux City, IA

Kelly Neylon, PhD
Principal
Woodridge School District 68
Woodridge, IL

Nadine Norris
Director of Technology, Teaching, and Learning
Community Unit School District 201
Westmont, IL

Jeanette Westfall
Director of Curriculum & Instruction and Staff Development
Liberty Public Schools
Liberty, MO

About the Authors

Diane Sweeney is the author of *Student-Centered Coaching: The Moves* (Corwin, 2016), *Student-Centered Coaching: A Guide for K–8 Coaches and Principals* (Corwin, 2011) and *Student-Centered Coaching at the Secondary Level* (Corwin, 2013). Each of these books is grounded in the simple but powerful premise that coaching can be designed to more directly impact student learning. Her first book, *Learning Along the Way* (Stenhouse, 2003), shares the story of how an urban elementary school transformed itself to become a learning community.

Diane spends her time speaking and consulting for schools and educational organizations across the country. She is also an instructor for the University of Wisconsin, Madison. When she isn't working in schools, she loves to spend time outside with her family in Denver, Colorado.

Ann Mausbach is the author of *School Leadership through the Seasons: A Guide to Staying Focused and Getting Results All Year* (Routledge Eye on Education, 2016) and *Align the Design: A Blueprint for School Improvement* (ASCD, 2008). These books provide practical guidance to school leaders interested in creating lasting reform in their schools.

Ann has served as a central office leader in a variety of roles including Coordinator of Staff Development, Director of Curriculum, Director of

Elementary Education, and Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction. She holds a PhD from the University of Kansas. She currently works as an Assistant Professor for Educational Leadership at Creighton University in Omaha, NE.

Introduction

"Every doorway, every intersection has a story."

—Katherine Dunn

HOW WE CAME TO THIS WORK

As an instructional coach for over 20 years, Diane has spent her career helping coaches develop their skills. Ann has spent over 20 years supporting principals in their work to improve schools. Their paths crossed when Ann hired Diane to support the coaches in her district. This began a collaboration that helped them both open the door wider to understanding how critical it is to be intentional about the intersection between the principal and coach.

Both realized that they had approached the work from a distinct lens. Diane's had been about developing the skills of teams of coaches, while Ann's focus was on making sure large school reform was happening. In other words Diane was advocating for coaches, and Ann was advocating for principals. It wasn't until they discussed writing this book that their perspectives began to change and grow. They acknowledged that sometimes their narrow view was getting in the way of making sure that coaching was working. Diane had to learn how coaching fits into the bigger school reform picture and not think of it as an isolated practice that would solve every problem. Ann had to learn that coaches were more than a "nice to have" role, but were critical in helping principals meet the teaching and learning demands in their school.

This book is a merging of both perspectives. It's not written for an audience of principal or for an audience of coach. It's written for both. While you may have previously read other books about student-centered coaching, this book takes a new stance by addressing the importance of the principal and coach partnership.

WHY THIS BOOK? WHY NOW?

We have encountered a variety of issues surrounding the principal and coach partnership. And even though we have varied backgrounds, it's interesting that the dilemmas are consistent across the K–12 schools where we work. If you have been involved in coaching, you've probably experienced some of these issues as well. Coaches trying to work around the principal, principals delegating too much to coaches, and coaches and principals working parallel rather than with each other. So much time, energy, and money are being expended with little impact. While this is often frustrating for teachers, the biggest losers are the students who miss out on deep, rich learning.

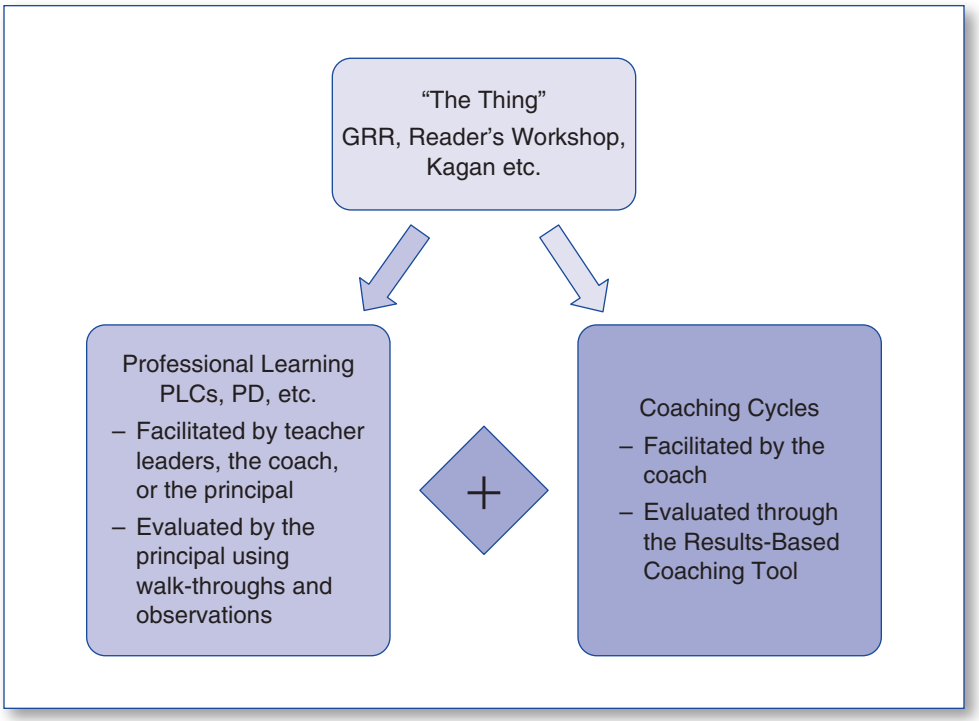
We have also found that in many districts there is a lack of support to principals regarding how to *lead* a coaching effort. This may be due to the simple fact that we haven't paid much attention to guiding principals through the rapid expansion of instructional coaching. We believe that when principals lack strategies for leading a coaching effort, they will encounter significant barriers to reaching their goal of positively impacting teaching and learning.

COACHING WITH THE BIG PICTURE IN MIND

Schools are complex systems. This complexity may lead us to try to do too many things at once. Lack of clarity results in people feeling confused, overwhelmed, and unsupported. The antidote to this confusion is to be thoughtful about what it is that you are going after, and then go after it with great intensity and focus.

One way we have learned to put the pieces together is to be clear about "the thing" we are trying to accomplish. This helps articulate how everything works together for the sake of student learning. Rather than wasting time and energy on unfocused efforts, schools can do better to align professional learning in service of student learning.

We like to use the following construct when thinking about how all the pieces fit together. *The thing* is whatever initiative your school has decided to implement. Examples include the implementation of the Gradual



Release of Responsibility (GRR), Reader's Workshop, Kagan Strategies for Cooperative Learning, or Authentic Intellectual Engagement (AIW). There is no shortage of these types of initiatives in today's schools. The key is to select the thing that has the most potential to impact your students. What makes the thing come to life are the two supports that rest underneath: professional learning and coaching cycles. Both are equally important if these efforts are going to take root.

As you read through the graphic, you'll notice that professional learning includes collaboration (such as professional learning communities, learning teams, and department meetings) as well as large group professional development. In these sessions, teachers are engaged in learning that relates to instructional pedagogy. This learning is facilitated by teacher leaders, the coach, or the principal. These efforts are evaluated by the principal engaging in walk-throughs and observations in classrooms throughout the school. Imagine your "thing" is to decrease lecture and increase student discussion. It becomes apparent that professional learning must be delivered and evaluated if there is any hope of providing what teachers need.

Coaching cycles are an additional support that are facilitated by the coach, and may occur with individuals, pairs, or small groups. The impact of coaching cycles is monitored based on teacher and student learning. The

in-depth support that is inherent in coaching cycles supports student learning while also reinforcing effective practices in the school improvement plan.

We have to keep in mind that coaching isn't an initiative (and that the coach isn't "the thing"). Rather it is an embedded support that helps all teachers meet the goals of the school. We view this as the intersection of school improvement, coaching, and most important learning, underscoring why the principal and coach relationship is so pivotal.

OUR INTENTIONS FOR THE CHAPTERS IN THIS BOOK

We chose to approach this book by tackling the toughest issues that are associated with integrating coaching into a school. Each chapter addresses a different aspect of building, sustaining, and learning from your coaching efforts. We provide practical ideas and solutions that can help you ensure that coaching is getting results.

With this in mind, we would recommend that you begin by building a solid understanding of the coaching model and strategies for school improvement (Chapters 1 and 2). After building this foundational knowledge, other chapters address common issues associated with leading coaching. Chapter 3 provides ideas and strategies to ensure that roles are clearly defined. In Chapter 4, you will learn how to integrate coaches in a way that contributes to a culture of learning. Creating a no opt culture is the focus of Chapter 5. All this rests on a clear understanding of what good instruction looks like, which is addressed in Chapter 6. Chapter 7 focuses on the perennial question of how to separate coaching from supervision. Finally, Chapter 8 addresses how to support coaches so they can continue to learn and grow.

In reading this book, we hope to create new intersections in how you think about coaching. We understand that leading a school isn't easy. That's all the more reason to learn how you can be more strategic about student-centered coaching. The story your school will tell rests on opening the doors and minds of your teachers and students. It is our hope that this book helps make this happen.

1 An Introduction to Student-Centered Coaching

"The work isn't done until every child benefits from the innovation."

—Nancy Mooney, District Leader

Instructional coaching has grown exponentially over the past two decades. Today there are coaches in large districts, small districts, urban districts, and rural districts. Coaches focus on subjects like mathematics, literacy, and technology. Others work across content areas. With millions of dollars and countless hours being dedicated to coaching, we must be sure that it is reaching the intended goal of increasing student and teacher learning.

Anything worth doing takes thoughtfulness, leadership, and a team approach. The same is true for coaching. While we often attribute the success of coaching to the skillfulness of the coach, the school leader is just as important to get the job done. The leader is essential because coaching is about lifting the learning of every member of the school community. We need everyone working together, taking risks, and committing to do what it takes to get there. At times, this may feel as challenging as lifting a 165,000 pound Space Shuttle off the ground. If you've seen the movie *The Right Stuff*, you may remember the scene when an astronaut is invited to join the team and he responds, "It sounds dangerous. Count me in." This

is the sense of urgency that we are looking for when it comes to leading a coaching effort. We simply don't have time to waste. Although the astronaut's life was on the line, we are talking about the lives of our students. We believe that their success is just as important.

WHY IT MATTERS

Coaching Matters, and We Can Do Better

It is the principal's role to go beyond simply supporting a coaching effort. The principal must lead it. It takes a well-informed and strategic principal to do just that. While the principal is the key player, we recognize that there may be other district leaders who are instrumental in leading a coaching effort as well. For example, in a typical elementary school, the principal often leads the coaching effort. In a large comprehensive high school, an academic vice principal may be the one who guides the work. Sometimes a district leader is the point person on a coaching effort. For this reason, we will use the language *school leader* and *principal* as we speak to the instructional leaders who will ensure that coaching reaches the desired outcomes.

Strong leaders build partnerships with the coach, understand how to separate coaching from evaluation, and position the coach to be a valued resource within the school community. Yet many leaders receive very little direction regarding how to best deploy a coach. It's a familiar story: We hire great teachers out of the classroom and then assume that their instructional background will be enough to get them started as coaches. Would we hire nurses to perform complex surgeries and not train them to do so? Of course not. So why do we take this approach with coaching?

A recent meta-analysis focusing on how coaching impacts instructional practice makes this work all the more essential. According to Kraft, Blazar, and Hogan (2016),

> Turning to our primary meta-analytic results for instruction, we find large positive effects of coaching on teachers' instructional practice. We find a pooled effect size of .58 standard deviations (SD) across all 32 studies that included a measure of instructional practice as an outcome. (p. 20)

As advocates for coaching, we are thrilled to see the correlation between coaching and instructional practice. But we think there's more to do. We'd like to ensure that coaching directly impacts student achievement as well. This takes leadership. In the book *Reduce Change to Increase*

Improvement, Robinson (2018) writes, "Leadership is the enabler of improvement, orchestrating the various conditions, such as professional capability, community engagement, and quality instruction, that need to be working together if improvement in student outcomes is to be achieved and sustained" (p. 9).

Let's Remember: The Purpose of School Is Student Learning

It's easy to lose perspective on the fact that the purpose of school is student learning. This somewhat obvious notion is often lost as we develop and deliver a coaching model. We busily create all kinds of systems and structures. We provide professional learning opportunities, and we negotiate what we expect of teachers. With all these balls in the air, it's easy to forget our driving purpose. Kids don't go to school to participate in programs, they don't go to school to behave, and they don't go to school to score well on state tests. They go to school to learn.

We can so easily make coaching about student learning. When Diane began grappling with how to be more student-centered in her coaching, she was also studying *Understanding by Design* by Wiggins and McTighe (2005). It came together when she read, "We ask designers to start with a much more careful statement of the desired results—the priority *learnings*—and to derive the curriculum from the performances called for or implied in the goals" (2005, p. 17). This notion of working backward from the desired results became the operating principle of student-centered coaching.

This approach accomplished a few things. It became much easier to develop partnerships with teachers because the coach's role was to help the students reach the goals that had been set by the teacher. The impact was clearer because the teacher and coach would formatively assess student learning every step of the way. It also became easier to identify the growth that the teacher had made instructionally because it was nested in the context of teaching *and* learning.

Having a Coaching Model Is the First Step

It's incredible how many districts have coaches and no coaching model. A coaching model is a framework; it does not tell you how to coach or what to coach. A coaching framework is the underlying structure that you can use when you're coaching someone. Rostron (2009) writes,

> Coaching models help us to understand the coaching intervention from a systems perspective, and to understand the need for "structure"

> in the interaction between coach and client. Models help us to develop flexibility as coach practitioners. They offer structure and an outline for both the coaching conversation and the overall coaching journey—whether it is for 20 hours, six months, a year or more. However, although models create a system within which coach and client work, it is imperative that models are not experienced as either prescriptive or rigid. (p. 116)

When a model is lacking, nobody really knows what coaches should be doing with their time. This can be downright confusing for members of the school community. Some teachers may worry that coaches will report their weaknesses back to the principal and that this information will be used in a punitive way. Others may assume that coaching only applies to teachers who are new or struggling. When school lacks a coaching model, the effort may become vague and has the potential to be a waste of resources. Here are some signs that a school is lacking a coaching model:

- Nobody knows the purpose for having a coach.
- Coaches aren't sure what they should be doing on a daily basis.
- Coaches don't receive guidance about how to organize and schedule their work.
- Coaches aren't provided with a clear process to follow when working with teachers.
- Coaches aren't sure who should participate in coaching cycles.
- There is no plan for measuring the impact of coaching.
- The coach is encouraged to "just build relationships" so that teachers won't be threatened.

The first step in determining the coaching model is deciding if coaching will be student-centered, teacher-centered, or relationship-driven. Figure 1.1 outlines each of these approaches based on a variety of factors. We find that starting here helps schools home in on their purpose for coaching.

Student-centered coaching is about partnerships where instructional coaches and teachers work together to reach their goals for student learning. This is a departure from a teacher-centered approach where the role of the coach is to implement a program or set of practices. Teacher-centered coaching may make sense when a school or district is adopting a new program or pedagogy because there are specific things a teacher may need to learn to implement. It can also be useful when new teachers need to learn how things are done in a school. The thing is, this approach can sometimes set the coach up to focus on what the teacher is—or isn't—doing. This may lead to the perception that the coach is there to hold teachers accountable

Figure 1.1 Coaching Continuum: Student-Centered, Teacher-Centered, and Relationship-Driven Coaching

More Impact on Students **Less Impact on Students**

	Student-Centered Coaching	**Teacher-Centered Coaching**	**Relationship-Driven Coaching**
Role	The coach partners with teachers to design learning that is based on a specific objective for student learning.	The coach moves teachers toward implementing a program or set of instructional practices.	The coach provides support and resources to teachers.
Focus	The focus is on using data and student work to analyze progress and collaborate to make informed decisions about instruction that is differentiated and needs-based.	The focus is on what the teacher is, or is not, doing and addressing it through coaching.	The focus is on providing support to teachers in a way that doesn't challenge or threaten them.
Use of Data	Formative assessment data and student work is used to determine how to design the instruction. Summative assessment data are used to assess progress toward standards mastery.	Summative assessment data are used to hold teachers accountable rather than as a tool for instructional decision making.	Data are rarely used in relationship-driven coaching.
Use of Materials	Textbooks, technology, and curricular programs are viewed as tools for moving student learning to the next level.	The use of textbooks, technology, and curricular programs is the primary objective of the coaching.	Sharing access and information to textbooks, technology, and curricular programs is the primary focus of the coaching.
Perception of the Coach	The coach is viewed as a partner who is there to support teachers to move students toward mastery of the standards.	The coach is viewed as a person who is there to hold teachers accountable for a certain set of instructional practices.	The coach is viewed as a friendly source of support who provides resources when needed.
Role of Relationships	Trusting, respectful, and collegial relationships are a necessary component for this type of coaching.		

Source: Sweeney, D. (2011). Student-Centered Coaching: *A Guide for K–8 Coaches and Principals.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin. Used with permission.

or "fix" them. Or coaches may experience frayed relationships, or feel uncomfortable with being put in the position of "expert."

While nobody would argue that relationships are foundational to coaching, we don't want to only focus here. Relationship-driven coaching occurs when the coach focuses on providing teachers with resources and support. It often feels safer because the coach's role is about making the lives of teachers easier. When coaches face resistance, they may back off and settle for providing resources. We would argue that this form of coaching fails to get the desired results, and isn't a place we'd hope coaches would occupy for too long.

Considering these different approaches is a first step in establishing a coaching program. Does the principal want coaching to be squarely about implementation? Are student-outcomes the focus? Is the role of the coach to provide resources? Whatever the choice, it's important to recognize that over the years, coaching has been viewed with trepidation because teachers felt as if coaching was something that was "being done to them." According to Sweeney (2011),

> Coaching often centers exclusively on the actions taken by the teacher—making the assumption that if we improve the teaching, then student learning will improve as well. There is some logic to this approach, but unfortunately an unintended outcome is we've spent so much time thinking about what teachers *should* be doing that we've lost touch with the most important people in our schools . . . the students. (p. 8)

With so many schools lacking a coaching model, we thought we'd provide some ideas about how you might add clarity to a model that is being newly developed or revamped. We'd suggest taking the steps outlined in Figure 1.2.

WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE

In any coaching effort, it is the principal's role to design it, define it, and lead it. Organizational development guru Warren Bennis once said, "Leadership is the capacity to translate vision into reality" (Booher, 1992). This certainly applies to leading a coaching effort. Schools often start with a vision of using coaches to provide job-embedded support to teachers. That's a terrific vision that we would certainly endorse. But let's be honest that translating that vision into reality is where things become more challenging. The following moves are designed to help school leaders do just that.

Figure 1.2 Developing a Coaching Model

1. Commit to a student-centered approach to coaching.
2. Articulate your beliefs and commitments about coaching.
3. Define your process for coaching cycles.
4. Create a list of duties that coaches are engaged in on a daily or weekly basis.
5. Decide how you would like coaches to participate in teacher collaboration, such as professional learning communities (PLCs).
6. Develop a master schedule that includes common times for teachers to meet with the coach, a weekly principal and coach meeting, and collaboration time for teachers.
7. Decide how coaches will measure the impact of coaching on teaching and learning.
8. Plan how you will handle things that will potentially divert the coach's attention away from coaching cycles and toward administrivia (i.e., covering classrooms, organizing data, participating in every collaboration that occurs during any given week, etc.).

Leadership Move #1: Understand the Core Practices for Student-Centered Coaching

It's hard to lead something that you don't understand. If principals have any chance of ensuring that effective coaching is taking place, then they need to understand what effective coaching looks like. Figure 1.3 outlines the core practices for student-centered coaching.

Leadership Move #2: Expect Coaching Cycles

There is a real temptation to assign a laundry list of duties to coaches. This includes organizing assessment data, creating schedules for interventions, managing materials, or assigning other duties that don't align with the role of the coach. It is an especially common practice when a school has an undefined coaching model, because nobody's really sure what the coach should be doing in the first place. It might be the coach who seeks out busy work because it feels better to have something to do. The truth is, coaches who take on the broadest array of duties will be in fewer coaching cycles and, thus, will make less of an impact on student and teacher learning. (Read more about defining roles in Chapter 3.)

We know that one-shot opportunities for professional development do little to improve student learning. If coaches aren't engaged in coaching

Figure 1.3 Core Practices for Student-Centered Coaching

Core Practice	Purpose
1. Organize coaching through cycles	Coaching cycles create the conditions for a coach to make a lasting impact. If coaches work with teachers on an informal, or one-shot, basis, then the results will be diminished.
2. Set a standards-based goal for coaching cycles	Coaching that isn't standards-based often misses the point that school should be about learning. We frame coaching around learning by setting standards-based goals for coaching cycles.
3. Use student-friendly learning targets throughout the coaching cycle	Learning targets increase instructional clarity and provide a mechanism for better assessment by the teacher and more self-assessment by the students.
4. Use student evidence to co-plan instruction	Student evidence is used to drive decision making when planning lessons. This aligns with our belief that coaching ought to be built on a foundation of formative assessment.
5. Co-teach with a focus on effective instructional practices	Rather than modeling or observing, we advocate for coaches and teachers to build partnerships while working together in the classroom.
6. Measure the impact of coaching on student and teacher learning	It is our obligation to collect data to demonstrate how teachers and students are growing across coaching cycles.
7. Partner with the school leader	Without a solid partnership, the coach will not be in the position to make the desired impact.

cycles on a regular basis, then their coaching will be far less efficacious. We'd even go as far as to say that when coaching cycles are lacking, the coach is most likely in a relationship-driven mode. Principals often ask how much time should be spent in coaching cycles. We advocate for coaches to spend *most* of their time in cycles because it is the most results-based work that they will do. Coaching cycles include the following components:

- 4 to 6 weeks in duration
- Can occur with individuals, small groups, or pairs
- Include at least one weekly planning session
- Include between one to three co-teaching sessions each week

Leadership Move #3: Ask Teachers About Their Goals for Coaching Cycles

There may be nothing more affirming than for a school leader to understand and support the goals that teachers are working toward with a coach. We recommend for principals to ask teachers about their goals so that they can be sure to create conditions for the goal to be met. A principal recently modeled this during a conversation in the hallway. She said to the teacher, "I see that you are in a coaching cycle. Can you tell me a little about your goal for student learning?" The teacher responded, "Yes, we are working on narrative writing that ties to our social studies curriculum. I'm working with the coach and social studies team to make it work." The principal responded, "That's a great goal, and it is very much aligned with our vision for integration. I'd love to come into the classroom when you and the coach are working together. I can't wait to see what your students are able to do with their writing."

With this simple exchange, the principal did a few things. First, she sent a message that she valued and was interested in the work the teacher was doing with the coach. She also gained some quick insights into the teacher's vision when it came to her writing instruction. Last, she used this conversation as an opportunity to see the teacher and coach in action. A simple conversation led to a deeper (and shared) understanding of the work that was taking place.

It's also important to recognize that quality goals matter. We'd hate for a coach and teacher to spend 6 weeks on a goal that wasn't rigorous or aligned with the curriculum. Therefore, we seek goals that are (1) standards based, (2) valued by the teacher, (3) the right size and scope, (4) measurable through formative assessment, and (5) robust enough to carry a teacher and coach across a coaching cycle. Examples of goals for coaching cycles are detailed in Figure 1.4.

You'll notice that the examples of coaching cycle goals don't focus on implementing programs, such as, "Teacher will use the gradual release of responsibility during lessons." They aren't at the surface (or skills) level, such as, "Students will learn how to decode words using CVC sounds."

Figure 1.4 Examples of Goals for Coaching Cycles

Elementary Literacy	Students will use a variety of strategies to solve unknown words in texts.
Middle School Math	Students will understand and use ratios to make sense of real-world situations.
High School Economics	Students will understand how supply and demand impacts their life as a consumer.

Goals also don't simply focus on content, such as, "Students will learn the important battles of the Civil War." Rather, they are rigorous, interesting, and aligned with the standards. This is how we ensure that coaching takes learning deeper.

Leadership Move #4: Understand and Promote the Use of Learning Targets

Many school districts missed the point when it came to using learning targets to drive instruction. They focused on whether or not teachers posted them on the board rather than on they could be used to help students take ownership over the learning process. Moss, Brookhart, and Long (2011) reframe the use of learning targets when they write,

> Learning targets have no inherent power. They enhance student learning and achievement only when educators commit to consistently and intentionally sharing them with students. Meaningful sharing requires that teachers use the learning targets with their students and students use them with one another. This level of sharing starts when teachers use student-friendly language—and sometimes model or demonstrate what they expect—to explain the learning target from the beginning of the lesson, and when they continue to share it throughout the lesson. (p. 67)

Student-centered coaching embeds learning targets into every conversation. This increases teacher clarity around what the students should know and be able to do so that we can reach the goal. When teachers understand what mastery looks like, then they are more focused and deliberate in their teaching. Without learning targets, teachers are blind. With them they have a clear roadmap to follow. Figure 1.5 provides an

Figure 1.5 Example of Student-Friendly Learning Targets

Coaching Cycle Goal: Students will understand and use ratios to make sense of real-world situations.

- I can use ratio language to describe the relationship between two quantities.
- I can apply my understanding of unit rate to make sense of ratios.
- I can create and manipulate tables to compare ratios.
- I can solve unit rate problems.
- I can solve for the whole when given a part and the percentage.
- I can engage productively in small group work.

example of student-friendly learning targets that were used during a coaching cycle in a middle school math class.

Leadership Move #5: Build Student Evidence Into All Forms of Teacher Collaboration

We've lost sight of the types of assessment that matter. Checklists have taken over, and many teachers may not even know how their students are really doing. For this reason, student-centered coaching is rooted in the use of student evidence. Examples include: writing samples, reading responses, exit slips, open-ended math problems, anecdotal notes, and problem-solving tasks. It is the real work that students did that very day, and it is work that makes student learning visible.

If you were to audit collaboration and professional learning in your school, how often would student evidence be a part of the conversation? In most schools, the answer is rarely. While data, such as interim assessments or "scores" are commonly used, student evidence is often overlooked. This is a mistake because it means we aren't valuing formative assessments enough to use them during collaborative decision making. We'd even venture to guess that without being prioritized, formative assessment may not be happening much at all.

Carol Ann Tomlinson (2014) writes,

> It isn't really so much that these teachers use formative assessments *often*. It's that they do so *continually*—formally and informally, with individuals and with the group, to understand academic progress and to understand the human beings that they teach. For these teachers, formative assessment is not ancillary to effective teaching. It is the core of their professional work. (p. 10)

We recommend for school leaders to embed student evidence into as many collaborative conversations as possible. This sends the message that we base our decision making on where our students are rather than on what a colleague is doing or what the teacher may have found on Pinterest.

Leadership Move #6: Facilitate and Support Data Analysis

Student evidence is one piece of the puzzle. It serves the purpose of improving the methods and practices we use to formatively assess students. We also need to develop systems around higher level data, or summative assessments. Building this infrastructure is under the purview of the principal because these forms of data are one of our strongest levers for

addressing concerns around student learning. Taking care to monitor student performance across the school year means that no students will fall through the cracks.

As a leading advocate for data-driven instruction, Paul Bambrick-Santoyo (2010) argues that all schools ought to be driven by data. He writes,

> Data-driven instruction is the philosophy that schools should constantly focus on one simple question: are our students learning? Using data-based methods, these schools break from the traditional emphasis on what teachers ostensibly taught in favor of a clear-eyed, fact-based focus on what students actually learned. (p. xxv)

There needs to be a clear distinction between the coach and principal when it comes to data that is used for the purposes of accountability. Coaches aren't in the role to lead these conversations because they are a tool for accountability rather than a tool for support. The reason for this is if we are using data teams to their full potential, then we are naming gaps in student performance and then taking action. Coaches aren't in the position to make teachers take action. Instead, they enter the picture when support is needed. Imagine a teacher who, through a data conversation, becomes aware that her students are at risk of not making a year's worth of growth as readers. Digging into this might become a meaningful goal for a coaching cycle. The key is for the coach to support the teacher to move student learning forward rather than looking for gaps in the teacher's performance. In this way, the coach and teacher honor their partnership and also work to execute the gaps that were surfaced through the data analysis.

Leadership Move #7: Keep Your Eye on Impact

A coach's biggest impact is made through coaching cycles, and coaching cycles must be measured. Otherwise we run the risk of implementing a coaching program with intangible results. As a school leader, expecting that coaching cycles are occurring is the first step. The second step is ensuring that they are being measured. We use the Results-Based Coaching Tool to understand how student and teacher learning were impacted. Figure 1.6 provides an overview of how we collect information when using the Results-Based Coaching Tool. We also included a template of the tool in Appendix E of this book.

We use the Results-Based Coaching Tool in many ways. Primarily, it is used to name and celebrate the growth that occurred as a result of coaching. If it is used as a "gotcha" tool, then teachers will begin to distrust the coaching process and steer clear. In Chapter 8, we provide ideas regarding

Figure 1.6 Measuring the Impact of a Coaching Cycle

At the Beginning of the Coaching Cycle	During the Coaching Cycle	At the End of the Coaching Cycle
Set a goal for student learning using the language, "Students will . . ."	Engage in weekly meetings to analyze student evidence and co-plan instruction.	Identify the instructional practices that the teacher is implementing on a regular basis.
After the goal is set, it is unpacked into student-friendly learning targets. This becomes the success criteria.	Work side by side to implement instructional practices that will support students to reach the goal.	Post assess to measure student performance in relationship to the goal for student learning. This provides growth data.
Pre assess to determine how they are doing in relation to the goal. This provides baseline data.	Continuously assess students using the learning targets.	Decide how to meet the needs of students who haven't reached mastery.

Source: Sweeney, D. (2011). *Student-Centered Coaching: A Guide for K–8 Coaches and Principals*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin. Used with permission.

how a school leader can use the Results-Based Coaching Tool as a centerpiece for providing feedback, support, and evaluation of coaches.

LESSON FROM THE FIELD

A Tale of Two Coaching Models

The following schools approached the launch of coaching in different ways. As you read their stories, consider the role that the principal played in introducing coaching to the faculty. Please note that the names of the schools were changed for the purposes of this book.

Emerson High School

Matt had been the principal at Emerson for several years and was known as the principal who left teachers to do their thing. He often shared that he got out of the way so that teachers could do their best work. Several teachers came to teach at Emerson because they had heard that the principal left you alone. Scott and Becky were hired from the teaching ranks to serve as technology integration coaches. Both were well liked by the staff. Matt hoped that this would smooth any discontent that may occur from having two new coaches in the school.

As they started the year, Scott and Becky reached out to Matt a few times to set up a planning meeting. It was hard to get it on his calendar and when they did meet, it was rushed. As new coaches, Scott and Becky felt like they were on their own to create the coaching model that would be used at Emerson. This was scary since they had never been coaches before. They also worried that they'd become enmeshed in supporting technology requests that didn't relate to learning in the classroom.

When they did finally meet, they asked Matt for guidance on how they would introduce themselves to the staff. He responded that they could share that they'll be "there for whatever the teachers needed." While they felt supported, it didn't feel like a plan. They wanted a plan.

Washington High School

Hugo and Amira were hired from the teaching ranks to serve as instructional coaches. Margaret was their principal and had a track record of fairness. When she learned that she would have two instructional coaches, her first step was to make sure she hired the right people for the job. Hugo was a well-regarded math teacher. Amira was a respected English Language Arts teacher who had been in the school for over 10 years.

Margaret acknowledged that in the past the school had used a teacher-centered coaching model, and she wanted the teachers to understand that this year would be different. To support this shift, she made sure to schedule regular meetings with the coaches. During these meetings, they would discuss how coaching was going and what she could do to help them take their work further. In their first meeting, they created a chart titled, "'What Coaching Is and Isn't" (Figure 1.7). Their plan was to share what they created at the first staff meeting.

When they introduced coaching to the staff, Margaret shared the chart, "What Coaching Is and Isn't." She focused on the belief that coaching was about helping teachers reach their goals for student learning. She also shared that she would be working closely with Hugo and Amira and that they would be seeking teacher feedback every step of the way. Teachers got the message loud and clear—this was important.

What Can We Learn From These Examples?

Leaving things to chance is not the way to get coaching off on the right foot. Margaret took ownership over the process so that there would be clarity among teachers about what coaching is and why it's important. This set up the coaches for success. When coaches are left to go it alone, they will struggle. This is not only unfair to the coaches but to the system as a whole. Why waste this precious resource?

Figure 1.7 What Coaching Is and Isn't

Coaching Is	Coaching Isn't
A partnership	Evaluative
Focused on student learning	Focused on making teachers do things
Good for our students	About fixing teachers
Outcomes and standards-based	A waste of time
Driven by teachers' goals	Driven by the administrator, coach, or district
Flexible and responsive	Fixed and inflexible
Fun and interesting	Something to avoid

WHERE ARE YOU NOW?

The following self-assessment focuses on the skills and understandings that principals must build if they choose to implement student-centered coaching. Each chapter includes a self-assessment of this kind. In this chapter, we support the principal to develop an understanding of student-centered coaching to lead the effort.

Figure 1.8 Self-Assessment for School Leaders

Understand the Philosophy and Methods for Student-Centered Coaching			
	Accomplished	**Developing**	**Novice**
The School Leader	The principal understands the core practices for student-centered coaching, subscribes to these practices, and provides support to move coaching forward. The principal provides the necessary pressure and support to ensure that coaching is used to its full potential.	The principal has some knowledge of the core practices for student-centered coaching, may question its value, or may not be actively involved in the coaching effort. The principal is beginning to find a balance between providing the adequate pressure and support to ensure that coaching is used to its full potential.	The principal is not supportive of, lacks knowledge in, or takes a passive approach to supporting the implementation of the core practices for student-centered coaching. The principal focuses on either pressure or support rather than finding a balance between the two. Coaching is not used to its full potential.

(Continued)

(Continued)

	Accomplished	Developing	Novice
Success Criteria	I can . . . • Support the coach to effectively use the core practices for student-centered coaching. • Organize the schedule to make time for coaching to occur. • Facilitate data collection and use data in collaborations, such as PLCs. • Create the infrastructure for regular data analysis. • Avoid using coaching in a punitive manner. • Supervise and support teachers who are at risk rather than asking the coach to do so.		

Troubleshooting Around Implementation of Student-Centered Coaching

We often hear from coaches and school leaders that they wish they had started with more clarity around their coaching model. The saying "Hindsight is 20/20" applies here because it's easy to go down the road of implementing coaching before the pieces are in place. If you are in this situation, here are some ideas to get coaching back on track (Figure 1.9).

Figure 1.9 Language for Supporting the Coaching Effort

If I hear . . .	Then I can say . . .
"Can't I just meet with the coach a few times?"	"We value coaching cycles because they provide the greatest impact. It takes more than a few coaching sessions to see it pay off with the students. That's what we want to focus on."
"Our teachers are overwhelmed, so this year we are going to focus on building relationships."	"I understand that there is a lot going on. But remember that our coaching model is based on helping students grow. Let's work to find out what is causing teachers to be overwhelmed and then the school leadership team can wrestle with those issues. We want to make sure our coaches stay focused on helping support student learning."
"I'm not sure what to expect from coaching, so I think I'll steer clear."	"Coaching as a student-centered practice that is all about helping you reach your goals for student learning. Let's talk about the differences between student-centered, teacher-centered, and relationship-driven coaching. That way you'll know what to expect."

THE COACH'S ROLE

While it is vital for the principal to support the use of the core practices for student-centered coaching, it's up to the coach to develop the skills they need to use them. If we had to pick a few things for a coach to focus on, these would be what we'd recommend. For more on these coaching moves, please read *Student-Centered Coaching: The Moves* (Sweeney & Harris, 2016).

Set the Right Goals

The goal-setting process is how we set up coaching to be student-centered. It is a pivotal part of the process, and we find that if the goal isn't "just right" then the coaching cycle may go sideways. A few areas to pay attention to when setting goals are:

Goal Setting for Coaching Cycles

- Is the goal focused on a standard?
- Is the goal challenging and rigorous for students?
- Is the goal just right (not too broad and not too narrow)?
- Does the teacher care about the goal?

Use Student Evidence in Planning Conversations

Coaches work with teachers to sort student work according to trends and then deliver differentiated instruction that matches exactly where the students are on any given day. Using student evidence provides the coach with the opportunity to help teachers make informed instructional decisions. We find it less useful to frame coaching around data such as interim or summative assessments. While assessments of this nature are important for a school system, they don't often inform the day-to-day decision making of teachers. Therefore, when using student evidence, we focus on written responses, open-ended problem solving tasks, responses to reading, anecdotal or conference notes, and anything else that makes the students' learning visible.

Remember That Coaching Also Happens in the Classroom

When we think about coaching, our first impulse is to expect the coach to model lessons. The problem is modeling doesn't go very far in building partnerships with teachers. Rather, we advocate for coaches to spend most of their time co-teaching. The following practices provide techniques that a coach can use working in classrooms with teachers (Figure 1.10).

Figure 1.10 Co-Teaching Moves

Coaching Move	What It Looks Like
Noticing and Naming	During the lesson, the teacher and coach focus on how the students are demonstrating their current understanding in relation to the learning targets. As we work with students, we will record student evidence that we will use in our planning conversations.
Thinking Aloud	The teacher and coach share their thinking throughout the delivery of a lesson. By being metacognitive in this way, we will be able to name successes and work through challenges in real time.
Teaching in Tandem	The teacher and coach work together to co-deliver the lesson. The lesson is co-planned to ensure the roles are clear, that the learning targets are defined, and that we both understand how the lesson is crafted.
You Pick Four	The teacher identifies four students whom the coach will focus on when collecting evidence. The coach keeps the learning targets in mind while collecting student evidence. This evidence is then used in future planning conversations.
Micro Modeling	A *portion* of the lesson is modeled by the coach. The teacher and coach base their decision about what is modeled on the needs that have been identified by the teacher.

Source: Sweeney, D., & Harris, L. (2016). *Student-Centered Coaching: The Moves*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin. Used with permission.

IN CLOSING

As coaching expands, so does the importance of garnering consistent results across schools. While we find some schools that leverage coaching to impact teacher and student learning, we find others that are struggling to make the same growth. The most successful schools have developed a strong partnership between the principal and coach. Without a solid principal and coach partnership, the impact of coaching is minimized.

Many principals receive very little support when it comes to leading a coaching effort. This may be due to the fact that instructional coaching has gone through a rapid expansion over that past decade. It's also challenging because schools are complex and difficult places to enact change.

But even with all this complexity, we can't leave it up to the coaches to lift the learning of the schools on their own. This leaves coaches feeling overwhelmed and unsupported. Give these coaches a few years, and they'll head straight back to the classroom. How about if instead we doubled down on the principal and coach partnership? This will allow us to get much more out of a coaching effort. When the principal and coach are working as a team, the sky's the limit. Much like it was for those astronauts who decided to take a risk and go for it.