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How to Create a *Coaching Program* that Works

Dr. Pamela R. Moran | Executive Director
Virginia School Consortium for Learning

Becky Ellis | Project Director
Edu21C

Inside this Guide

Learn how to design a coaching program that:

- Increases student achievement
- Decreases teacher turnover
- Improves teacher practice



Meet the Authors



Dr. Pamela R. Moran, Ed. D.
Executive Director,
Virginia School Consortium for Learning
@pammoran

Dr. Pamela Moran is Executive Director of the Virginia School Consortium for Learning. She was Virginia's 2016 Superintendent of the Year, and one of four finalists for the National Superintendent of the Year. She serves on the Maker Education Board of Directors, and advises both the Future Ready initiative for the Alliance for Excellent Education, and the American Institute of Architects Education Committee. She served with the Aspen Institute's National Commission on Social, Emotional and Academic Development, and was a gubernatorial appointee to the Virginia State Council on Higher Education. In 2018, she co-authored Timeless Learning: How Imagination, Observation, and Zero-based Thinking Change Schools, emphasizing the value of student-led, project-based pedagogy. As Superintendent of Albemarle County Public Schools (2005-2018), hers became one of the top performing school districts in Virginia, ranked by Niche in the top 2% of school districts nationwide. The district received the National School Board Association's Magna Award for innovative programming.

New teachers who don't receive mentoring and other supports leave at more than twice the rate of those who are supported.

When I first met Becky Ellis at my district's annual New Teacher Academy, I was struck by her story: she left a law practice to become a high school English teacher. She had always wanted to teach, but her parents, who were teachers, had discouraged her because of the job's demands and lack of support. When she entered the teaching profession, Becky found herself amidst novice teachers half her age and experienced teachers new to the district. This created some dissonance for her, but she plunged right into the adventure - literally.

As an instructional coach, Becky often shared her first-day-of-teaching story of falling into a trash can while giving a well-rehearsed inspirational speech to a room full of stunned high school freshmen. Fortunately, she'd also landed in a school with an instructional coach who had the expertise to support her in managing time, communicating with parents, addressing student learning needs, and designing a classroom space to enhance instruction.

Becky learned to share vulnerabilities, take risks, reflect, and focus on student achievement much more quickly than if she'd landed in a school without adequate coaching support. This positive beginning helped her succeed in the classroom, inspiring her to eventually become a coach herself. She has supported scores of novice and experienced teachers in topics including equity, engagement, learning intentionality, and culture. More importantly, Becky's work as a coach has encouraged more reflective practice among teachers and positively affected students' experiences and performance.

I often wonder if Becky would have succeeded without access to an instructional coach. The hard truth is that new teachers who don't receive mentoring and other supports leave at more than twice the rate of those who are supported. Veteran teachers are also leaving the profession at alarming rates. This turnover contributes to our national teacher shortage, as roughly 60% of teachers hired every year are replacing those who left the classroom before retirement[1]

1. ("What's the Cost of Teacher Turnover?" 2017)

From my 13 years as a superintendent, I can tell you that personnel costs are the biggest slice of a district's annual budget. Not only does the turnover of educators, our most precious resource, represent significant financial cost, it also has severe implications on student achievement. Research shows that urban districts can, on average, spend more than $20,000 on each new hire, including expenses related to recruitment, hiring, and training. Turnover negatively affects students as well. Research from Stanford University revealed that "an increase in teacher turnover ... corresponded with a decrease in math achievement" and that "the negative effect of turnover on student achievement was larger in schools with more low-achieving and black students."[2]

Supporting teachers to stay in the profession and contribute to student achievement offers a significant return on investment for communities, the workforce, and young people.[3] Given Becky's and my combined education experiences and perspectives gleaned from jobs including novice and tenured teacher (both with and without formal instructional coaching), instructional coach, school principal, central office administrator, and district superintendent, we believe that what we've found is essential to planning and implementing a successful coaching model.

In this e-book, Becky and I first focus on why professional learning supported by instructional coaching must be intentionally designed. We then address considerations for designing an effective coaching model targeted to your district's instructional needs. We believe that effective instructional coaching is defined by equity in and access to the very best learning we can make possible for all students.

Becky and I hope this resource will guide you as you make decisions that develop teachers and, as a result, positively impact learners and learning.

Dr. Pamela R. Moran, Ed.D.

> "Not only does the turnover of educators, our most precious resource, represent significant financial cost, it also has severe implications on student achievement."

2. (Sawchuk 2012) | 3. (Haynes 2014)



Meet the Authors

Becky Ellis, *Innovation Projects Director, Edu21C*

Becky Ellis is Innovation Projects Director for Ted Dintersmith's Edu21C Foundation, where she partners with school district administrators and teacher leaders to re-imagine and reshape schools to better serve students' needs now and in the future. She has taught secondary English and Social Studies classes and served as both a technology and instructional coach with Albemarle County Public Schools in Virginia. Education is both a passion and a second career for Becky, who spent 20 years as a technology and environmental lawyer before switching to the classroom. She wants everyone to know that teaching is much more difficult than practicing law.

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SECTION I

Essential Ingredients that Create Critical Impact

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What coaching elements must be present to critically impact teacher practice and student achievement?

Districts grow successful teachers not by chance, but through the conscious actions of school leaders.

Such purposeful attention increases transfer of effective practices and engages teachers in improving competencies essential to student achievement. Coaching is one way districts address their challenges. However, not all coaching models equally impact basic district goals to change and improve practice, retain teachers, and increase student achievement.

So what coaching elements **must be present** to critically impact teacher practice and student achievement? Designing for district-wide change begins with defining the intended result: the desired state of learning for students - and adults. Jennie Magiera, instructional coach and author of EdVentures, identifies four essential ingredients of a transformational coaching model amplifying the role of coaches as key leaders of systemic change in a school or district. Coaches can support and lead for change when their model:

Essential Ingredients for Coaching

1. **Focuses the coach on growing teacher mindset as well as skill set.**
2. **Begins with teacher goals in order to address larger system goals.**
3. **Sets the coach up for success.**
4. **Makes coaching visible.**

This may sound easy, but incorporating these essential elements into a coaching program plan that works within your district's unique context[5] can present a significant design challenge. Make sure you explore a variety of models in choosing the option that best fits your district's needs.

4. (Magiera 2019) | 5. (Insight Education Group n.d.)



SECTION II

Making the Case for a Coaching Model With Impact

Key Takeaway

A district must plan by designing for intended impact.

SRI's recent analysis of the New Teacher Center coaching model shows that coaching may not address every desired outcome without laser-like focus on alignment.[6]

?

How might coaching add a value proposition to support the district's vision and expectations for student learning?

A district must plan by designing for intended impact.[7] Before a school district decides to adopt a coaching model, we cannot overemphasize the value of the following key questions in designing and implementing a coaching model that's more likely to achieve intended results.

❒ What do you expect the coaching model to accomplish?

❒ How might coaching add a value proposition to support the district's vision and expectations for student learning?

❒ What new or redirected investments must be made to ensure the program's liftoff and sustainability over time?

❒ How will you assess the coaching model's implementation and expected outcomes?

These core questions suggest one more that's essential to successful use of coaching, and may demand that staff assess the current state of strategic work linked to coaching:

❒ What changes must be made to align the district's learning philosophy, policies, expected professional behaviors, and observable classroom practices with the selected coaching model?

6. (Young et al. 2017)

7. (The University of Florida: Lastinger Center for Learning, Learning Forward, and Impact 2016



SECTION III

Impact Considerations

"Deliberate practice is not feasible in education without **video!**"

Thomas Kane
Visibly Better

When designing an impactful instructional coaching model, our experience and the research suggest that some things matter much more than others.

RELATIONSHIPS MATTER

When collaboration and conversation are key coaching behaviors, a model with explicit focus on teachers, coaches, and principals working together can lead to collective leadership across a system.[8] Training and time are key variables to focus effective collaboration strategies. Both are enhanced through virtual coaching; and for individual programs, more coaching time means better results.[9]

Long-held misperceptions are that virtual coaching doesn't hold a candle to having a coach and a teacher in the room together. In fact, research shows little difference in the effectiveness of online and face-to-face coaching programs, and virtual capability is essential for any effective instructional coaching program.[10] Virtual capability, particularly using video, can increase teacher time with coaches, encourage reflection, and positively support scaling a coaching model. It should be a top design consideration for any coaching program.[11] As Thomas Kane of Visibly Better[12], a national working group launched by Harvard University's Center for Education Policy Research (CEPR), notes in this excellent summary of his findings, "Deliberate practice is not feasible in education without video!" [13]



Research shows little difference in the effectiveness of online and face-to-face coaching programs, and virtual capability is essential for any effective instructional coaching program.

8. (Aguilar 2013) | 9. (Kraft and Blazar 2018) | 10. (Kraft and Blazar 2018) | 11. (Breslow 2017)
12. (HarvardCEPR 2017) | 13. (Moody 2019)



BEHAVIORS MATTER

Instructional coaching grounded in a cycle of side-by-side planning, modeling, observation, and reflective feedback/discussion increases impact on the use of new practices and student achievement.[14] Coaching paired with specific professional development is most likely to result in practice transfer into the classroom and in increased student achievement.

FIDELITY MATTERS

Effort to scale a coaching model to impact more teachers reflects the challenge of scaling most programs.[15] Current research indicates that coaching programs with 100 or more teachers show only half of the effects achieved in smaller programs.[16] Implementing a model with a small-scale coaching prototype (fewer than 100 teachers) and slow expansion may mitigate risks associated with large-scale change.

14. (Quintero 2019) | 15. (Mahnken 2018) | 16. (Kraft, Blazar, and Hogan 2018)

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SECTION IV

Quick Tip Questions

Key Takeaway

Your coaching model should incorporate the four essential ingredients (Section I) as well as target your district's unique context and desired outcomes.

Your Notes:

Consider these important points when building your coaching program:

LEADERSHIP

Will your instructional coaches be supervised by central office staff or individual school leaders? Central office control may be best for promoting district-wide change. Coaches managed by individual schools will be more isolated and may face pressures to spend their energy on local concerns. Centrally managed coach evaluation will have more fidelity.

RESOURCES

How will you fund and staff coaching positions? Will the positions be permanent or term-limited? **What role will virtual coaching play in your model, and how might you leverage existing funding for additional tech resources?** Will your coaches have the necessary office space for private meetings?

IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS

Recruiting

How will you recruit candidates? **How will you determine the characteristics of a successful coach?** What will the interview process look like?

Training

What kind of training and professional growth opportunities will your coaches receive? They'll require instructional support and mentoring, just like any other novices. What instructional frameworks will your coaches employ? What rubrics or other tools will you use to ensure fidelity in approach and execution across your coaching team? Will coaches need specialized training in new technologies or data analysis, or will other employees handle those areas? What about training in adult learning, active listening, and other general coaching skills?

Your Notes:

Support & Feedback

How will you maximize the potential of coaching? When it's critical for teachers and coaches to collaborate, reflect together, and focus feedback, how will you build time into the schedule? Can you create virtual options using video? **How will you support the time needed to provide weekly coaching for novice teachers?**[17]

Logistics

Will coaches teach part-time? Will they have a hierarchy? Will coaches serve multiple schools? Will they work solely with novices? If not, will veteran teachers opt in for coaching as needed or be required to engage in coaching cycles?[18] **Will teachers significantly failing to meet expectations receive a different coaching experience?** How will you ensure equity in coaching caseloads?

RESULTS

What will success look like? **How will you measure coaching performance, improvements in teacher practice, and student achievement?** How often and from whom will you gather data? How will you ensure fidelity within your model?[19]

ASSESSMENT FOR CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

How will you conduct routine program evaluation to inform improvements? Will you need to scale your coaching efforts? If so, how?

17. ("High Quality Mentoring and Induction Practices" 2016)
18. (Gawande 2011)
19. (Pearce and Ferguson 2018)



SECTION V

What Will You Do Tomorrow?

Key Takeaway

Districts that employ a focused coaching model are more likely to positively impact learners and learning.

Engage a diverse team of educators to steer the process from initial research to a planning and implementation cycle.

We know that coaching develops teachers with increased efficacy, confidence, and commitment to the young people they teach.[20] Who wouldn't want those teachers in every classroom?

In our former roles working together as district-level superintendent and building-level instructional coach, we learned that changing practices, increasing student achievement, and retaining teachers are all critically important. We also know that when a district relies on stand-alone workshops, conferences, coursework, or faculty sessions for professional development, teachers will lack the strategic support essential to changing practice or improving achievement.

> Remember that virtual coaching can increase teacher and coach interaction, and studies indicate that asynchronous video coaching works as well as face-to-face coaching.

Instructional coaching is a powerful systemic strategy that positively impacts student achievement, but only when the model intentionally includes essential time for teacher and coach to engage in goal-specific reflection and feedback. This key takeaway will help you select and implement an effective coaching model tailored to your strategic priorities. Remember that virtual coaching can increase teacher and coach interaction, and studies indicate that asynchronous video coaching works as well as face-to-face coaching.[21]

20. (Instructional Coaching: Seeding District-Wide Innovation 2015)

21. (Kraft and Blazar 2018)

> It is through these lenses and strategic design that instructional coaching's full potential becomes reality, and that teachers like Becky develop the expertise and sustain the passion for education that they - and all the students in your district - deserve.

As you develop your coaching model:

❒ Engage a diverse team of educators to steer the process from initial research to a planning and implementation cycle.

❒ Generate goals and questions critical to your decision-making process.

❒ Research and seek advice from districts with successful coaching programs.

❒ Conduct site visits to gather information aligned with your goals and interests.

❒ Use what you learn to determine how coaching can help your district achieve its performance goals.

❒ Sell, don't tell. Work with your team to develop and implement a plan that engages teachers in the deeper professional learning that coaching will bring into their classrooms.

This won't be easy. Developing a successful coaching program requires careful planning and implementation, flexibility to modify your approach, and an unyielding commitment to supporting coaches and teachers engaged in the rigorous professional learning that coaching makes possible. As you undertake this journey, never lose sight of your overarching expectations for students and the need to ground your efforts in core concepts of equity, engagement, learning intentionality, and culture.[22] It is through these lenses and strategic design that instructional coaching's full potential becomes reality, and that teachers like Becky develop the expertise and sustain the passion for education that they - and all the students in your district - deserve.

22. (Cary 2015)



SECTION IV

Change Begins with YOU

Key Takeaway

Students do not come to us with the same interests, backgrounds, or needs, but I believe they all come to us with the same high hopes and aspirations, even if that's not always apparent.

Unlocking
Student & Teacher
Potential



SUPPORT



RESOURCES



ACTION

To unlock the potential within each of our students and turn hopes and dreams into reality, we must end the predictive value of race, class, gender, and disabilities upon student success.

This will not happen by chance:

- It will happen when we systematically support teachers to develop and sustain a collective efficacy from their first day on the job until their last.
- It will happen when we utilize every resource possible to value teachers and the real difference they can make in the learning lives of all students.
- It is our moral imperative as educators to make "All Means All" more than a hashtag.
- It must become a truth for all learners.

If we truly mean to create the opportunities that learners need and desire to thrive - not just survive - in school, in their homes and communities, as citizens, and ultimately in a contemporary workforce, we must change the system.

That change begins with you.

APPENDIX

Mini Readiness Evaluation for Coaching

Ellis/Moran District Example
Plus-Delta Model*

* The Plus Delta Model is used to analyze and evaluate what a district is already doing that provides a success platform upon which to scaffold or build a new area of focus. The Plus side documents what's already working and the Delta documents opportunities for improvement, expansion, or extension. The Plus Delta is from Montgomery (Md) County Public Schools, a Baldrige National Quality Award school district.

Readiness Questions	What further opportunities should we pursue to build and sustain a successful coaching model?	What do we already do to support coaching as an addition to our professional learning continuum?
What do you expect the coaching model to accomplish in your district?	Identify what district goals we expect a coaching model to impact. We need to describe why this model is necessary.	We already assign mentors to new teachers to help them transition into a new school.
How might coaching add a value proposition to support the district's vision and expectations for student learning?	Establish a team to seek input in developing an observation and reflection model that provides unencumbered time to collaboratively focus on high impact instructional strategies that improve student performance.	We have a commitment to professional development training in specific areas targeted to student performance but we believe that coaching will increase transfer.
What new or redirected investments must be made to ensure the program's lift-off and sustainability over time?	Consider how to fund coaching staff - possibly do a prototype or phase-in process in a few schools. We can redirect some funding but will need to add some staffing in the future. We can build a budget to support both planning and implementation processes.	Some existing funds are dedicated to professional development and for mentor support. The Board is supportive of implementing a coaching model. We can begin by redirecting existing funds.
How will you assess implementation and expected outcomes of the coaching model?	First convene a team to determine the outcomes we expect and then determine metrics we will use as we implement coaching to evaluate progress.	We already have Board-adopted strategic goals for student achievement and teacher performance.

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