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## BUILDING AND IMPLEMENTING NEW TEACHER COACHING PROGRAM IN A PROGRESSIVE INDEPENDENT MIDDLE SCHOOL

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### ABSTRACT

This action research project served as a vehicle to develop, analyze, and reflect on the design and effectiveness of a new teacher coaching program in a progressive independent middle school. This year, the coaching program supported two teachers who are both new to the school and new to the profession, neither of whom completed traditional teacher preparation programs. Data was collected through pre and post surveys and interviews with the two new teachers; a beginning of year survey with leadership; a midyear program check-in with leadership; weekly feedback slips from teachers; a field journal; ongoing informal conversations; and elements related to the structure of the program itself. The project sought to assess what structural elements are necessary to sustain a successful and equitable coaching program at our school; how the unique culture and history of the school influences coaching work; what qualities and practices are valuable for a coach; and what next steps the program should consider. The findings suggest the significant role of school and staff culture in integrating new systems and the impact of adult culture on coaching relationships; the ongoing work of considering and balancing equity for students, teachers, and families, specifically in an independent school; and the impact a coaching program can have on teacher retention, and retention of new teachers of color in particular.

### RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What does effect coaching look like in my school setting?
  - What about teaching and coaching is unique to our school?
  - What does equitable coaching mean for our diverse students, teachers, and school community?
  - What elements are necessary to introduce, support, and sustain instructional coaching at our site?
2. How can I assess and improve the efficacy of my coaching?
  - What makes it effective or ineffective? What are my strengths, weaknesses, or biases?
  - How can I grow as a coach/mentor? What resources and/or processes do I have - or should I tap into - to develop my practice?

### METHODS

Data collection instruments:

- Beginning of year surveys to teachers and leadership
- Beginning of year interviews with teachers
- Weekly feedback slips
- Midyear check-in with leadership
- February surveys and interviews with teachers
- Field journal
- Artifacts: time documentation records, weekly schedule, structure of program

### FINDINGS

<b>Finding 1</b>	Structural elements are critical <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Honoring time and scheduling</li><li>• Streamlining systems for communication; accepting cultural norms around communication</li><li>• Clarifying roles and acknowledging constructive overlap</li></ul>
<b>Finding 2</b>	Understanding and articulating our context and its impact
<b>Finding 3</b>	Considering the relationship between hiring, coaching, and equity
<b>Finding 4</b>	Identifying qualities of an effective coach in this context <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The role of relationships</li><li>• Giving direct and productive feedback</li><li>• Building a coaching toolkit</li><li>• Advocating for teachers</li><li>• Fostering teacher investment</li></ul>
<b>Finding 5</b>	Professional growth and support for a coach

### IMPLICATIONS & MOVING FORWARD

Through this project, I was able to be more thoughtful, purposeful, and research-driven in developing and enacting the coaching program at my school. From the study and experience, I learned about myself as a coach and teacher leader and about the process of building and bringing something new to a school with well-established systems and culture. This clearly demonstrated the power of collaboration, how to refine and use voice and advocacy, the complexity of supporting students and staff simultaneously, and the role coaching plays in working toward equity in schools. Moving forward, the work this project highlights will continue to be

strengthened and built upon. Next year, the program will support the two teachers focused on in this study, in addition to three other staff members in teaching roles. I will continue to refine my practices as a coach, and will also work with the Dean of Instruction around professional development for all faculty.

### Next Steps for Coaching Program

ACTION ITEM	DETAILS	TIMELINE
End of year debrief and next year planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consider adjustments or areas of focus for 2019-2020</li> <li>Specifically discuss role of equity in coaching program (for teachers, for students, in student data, in hiring)</li> </ul>	June 2018; summer 2018
Survey full faculty on top instructional and cultural practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Survey faculty on what instructional and cultural practices they deem most important</li> <li>Share data with staff to prompt a group conversation</li> </ul>	June retreat 2018
Develop a loose scope and sequence for new teachers	Use survey results (above) to guide	August 2018
Be more clear in communication around coaching to full staff and new teachers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Head and Dean L to more clearly communicate around coaching program with staff; emphasize culture of shared craft</li> <li>Head and Dean L to outline coaching work with new teachers in order to articulate expectations and build investment</li> <li>Coach to clearly outline expectations, culture of coaching, and processes in beginning of year</li> </ul>	Beginning of year 2018
Have coach observe guest lessons in hiring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Coach to observe guest lessons; give feedback after lesson</li> </ul>	When hiring

### Personal Goals

GOAL	QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION; DETAILS
Improve direct feedback	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How can I use personal experiences to share the culture of school?</li> <li>How can I better utilize the initial coaching conversation with teachers to set a stage for structures, expectations, and practices around feedback?</li> <li>Check in on feedback periodically throughout year</li> <li>Assess preferred method of feedback (see Danielle's project)</li> </ul>
Better utilize student work data to drive coaching cycles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How is student work currently used in debrief protocols? How can I improve this?</li> <li>How are teachers talking about and setting goals based on student work?</li> <li>How does student work demonstrate their success on teaching goals?</li> <li>Consider other data utilized: Around management, student discourse, how frequently teacher implements what we work on, etc.</li> </ul>
More intentionally and critically consider equity in the coaching program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What conversations around equity in coaching need to be had? With whom, and when?</li> <li>What does equity mean and look like for students? What does equity mean and look like for teachers? Where do these align? Where do they conflict?</li> <li>How do our conversations around equity for teachers and equity for students influence or inform hiring practices and decisions?</li> </ul>
Seek out ongoing learning and networking opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Join independent schools coaches' roundtable</li> <li>Propose Art of Coaching Equitably workshop next fall/winter</li> <li>Seek out coach to observe/shadow at independent and public school</li> </ul>