

Coaches and PLCs Support Teacher Use of Instructional Data

March, J.A., Bertrand, M., & Huguet, A. (2015). Using data to alter instructional practice: The mediating role of coaches and professional learning communities. *Teachers College Record, 117, 1-40.*



SWIFT Feature in the Research

Inclusive Academic Instruction

Research Summary

What

This study investigated whether the use of coaches or professional learning communities (PLCs) had an impact on how educators used **data** to change instruction. They identified coaching and PLCs as common sources of capacity building for teachers.

Their literature search found that coaching positively impacted teachers' implementation of specific reading instruction and standards and overall teacher practice. Content knowledge increased. Research on PLCs showed participants have stronger relationships with colleagues, though there was not a direct impact on instruction. Interpersonal relationships increased. The selection of these two strategies supported the researchers' desire to study the relationship between content knowledge and interpersonal relationships and how those affect teachers' use of **data** to make instructional change.

Who

The researchers worked with six low-performing middle schools in four districts. The participants included coaches, PLC leaders, teachers, district leaders (i.e., superintendents, assistant superintendents, and individuals overseeing literacy efforts), as well as non-case study teachers.

How

Over one year, data were collected via interviews, focus groups, Web-based surveys, and a final survey.

Major Findings

Coach and PLC support was pivotal in helping teachers review and alter how they used **data** to provide instruction, and coaching was found to be the more effective practice. The researchers introduced a theory to explain this outcome.

Coaching provides a unique situation where two professionals from different settings (e.g., a content specialist and a classroom teacher) expand and improve their

practices by working together to develop solutions. Though they come from different contexts, they find similar ground in their efforts. This is one type of expertise. Another expertise is the coach's content knowledge of the sought skill or topic. The researchers suggest that successful coaching requires a positive experience of both areas of expertise. The success of the coaching relationship hinges not only on the knowledge or skill of the coach, but also the interpersonal skills of both individuals and their ability to share resources and information.

Conclusion

SWIFT educator teams and coaches use data to guide decision making and instructional changes. The findings of this article provide support for PLCs and Coaches, as well as a deeper look into the skills, knowledge, and interpersonal skills applied during PLCs and coaching relationships.

Suggested Citation

SWIFT Center. (2016, July). *Coaches and PLC Support Teacher Use of Instructional Data*. Research to Practice Brief. Lawrence, KS: Author.



SWIFT Center produced this document under the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs Grant No. H326Y120005. OSEP Project Officers Grace Zamora Durán and Tina Diamond served as the project officers. The views expressed herein do not necessarily represent the positions or policies of the U.S. Department of Education. No official endorsement by the U.S. Department of Education of any product, commodity, service or enterprise mentioned in this publication is intended or should be inferred. This product is public domain. Authorization to reproduce it in whole or in part is granted. While permission to reprint this publication is not necessary, please use the citation provided above.