



Coach Tool

Guidelines for Teaming with Colleagues (+ support documents)

By

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For Literacy or Instructional Coaches, K-12

Purpose

This tool for literacy or instructional coaches, K-12 is the result of four years of literacy coaching with colleagues in my elementary school setting. It outlines the practices I have found essential to assure continued implementation of a strategy or agreed upon focus. In working with other coaches locally and in presenting this information at the Michigan Reading Association conference in Detroit last spring, I have come to realize that this tool may be helpful to others in our unique roles as literacy leaders.

This tool is to be used as a guide for a coach or instructional leader when beginning to work with a new group or individual teacher. It distills the necessary elements of planning, accountability and a gradual release of responsibility to provide the best possible start and structure for the work done with colleagues.

Use

If the teaming will be a regularly scheduled event, I recommend setting up a regularly scheduled planning time to occur before/after the teaming. During the first planning time together, it is important to set goals for student learning based on:

1. student achievement data
2. State/local curricular standards
3. any personal goals the teacher has for implementing new modes of best practice instruction
 - A “Brainstorming Planning Form” (Attachment #1) is included to help colleagues plan for these three areas.

During subsequent planning sessions:

1. Debrief about the last teaming session. *“So we did this together... And the students did this... and we noticed...”*
2. Share teacher metacognition. *What were we thinking as we taught? Did we change anything mid lesson? Would we change anything if we had it to do over?*
3. What was the outcome? *Did we meet the student learning goals we set? How will this help us plan the next step to take with students?*
4. Plan next steps. *What are our goals for our next teaming session? Who will be doing what and what will we watch for re: student learning?*
 - A “Planning Meeting Guide” (Attachment #2) is included to guide this conversation.

Planning sessions can be as short as 10 minutes if focused, but they are extremely important. They solidify the teaming experience and ensure that the learning will be applied.

When you share the teaching, it is an effective choice and a productive experience for one colleague to model for another as long as that mode is chosen for the right reasons.

Things to look for in good instructional modeling:

1. Both colleagues are engaged with the students.

This may look like one is teaching and one is observing, but the observing teacher is doing just that – not on the phone, out of the room, or planning for other instruction.

- A Sample “Teaming Lesson Template” with observation guide (Attachment #3) is included.

Both colleagues feel comfortable to interrupt instruction to ask questions of the students, make connections, and/or think aloud for the students.

The colleagues might even stop and have “teacher talk” for a moment, similar to a “time-out” in a game. The classroom teacher has immense background knowledge on what the class has been thinking about over the course of a school year, so it is important to stop and think aloud often. One great benefit of teaming is that students get to hear adults process their thinking and say out loud what we hope students might be thinking in their own minds about the new learning.

3. During independent practice, both colleagues are engaged with students.

- If one adult is closely observing an interaction between the other adult and a student, this counts.

4. There is a specific timeline for the modeling and an end in mind.

- The modeling should be to meet a specific goal for student learning and should be measurable with data.
- The modeling should include a plan for the second colleague to take the lead role over time. It is important that the teaming doesn’t create dependence, but rather independence over time.

Insights

I have realized just how powerful our work is with our colleagues and their students. It is with a high level of trust that they welcome us into their classroom communities and open their minds to the change we offer. To fully value that trust, our ways must be bathed in humility and our communication intent on service. Sharing this outlined process with other literacy leaders promotes the very highest expectations for all involved in coaching, or “teaming” scenarios. The term “teaming” was chosen for this document to illustrate that both colleagues are learning and teaching together and to eliminate the echelon view that coaching often implies.

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Attachment #1

Brainstorming Planning Form for Teaming with Colleagues

Research – Student Needs:

- How is it going?
- What are some of your students' specific literacy needs?
- What could we do together to meet some of those needs?

Research – Instructional Needs:

- With what type of literacy instruction do you want more experience or information?
- With what curricular standards do you feel you would like more instructional support?

Literacy instruction details to keep in mind:

- Does the instruction align with the standards/benchmarks for English/Language Arts at this grade level?
- Is the direct instruction balanced with adequate time for independent practice? (i.e. reading at independent level w/ accuracy 40-60 min. per day)
- Is the instruction aligned with current best practice research?

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Attachment #3

Teaming Lesson

Date: _____

Time: _____

Who: _____

Lesson focus (or teaching point): _____

Supplies:

Lesson Outline:

- Connection
- Modeling
- Active Engagement
- Independent Practice
- Share

Notes from Lesson Implementation:

(One copy of this form goes to both colleagues. This section is for the observing colleague to take notes on the lesson, record any questions, note student learning, etc. These notes will be essential to guide the upcoming planning session between the two colleagues.)