

## Welcome Coaches—They're Allies, Not Spies



"If leaders supported coaching programs because they understand the value, teachers will support coaching because they understand the growth that could come out of the relationship. Coaches can help teachers grow, and [teachers'] coaches can grow in the process" (DeWitt, 2016).

If coaching is beneficial, why do some teachers shut the door on this professional opportunity instead of putting out the welcome mat? Here are some myths that get in the way of a productive coach-teacher relationship, and the realities of coaching that works well.

**Myth:** Teachers don't need coaches. Professional development is enough.

**Reality:** Coaching has been shown to significantly improve implementation of professional development (Joyce & Showers, 2002). Coaches focus on best practices, connect colleagues with one another, and provide an important and fresh outside perspective. Instructional coaches can help teachers zero in on their unique classroom needs, find resources to facilitate their teaching and learning, and ultimately encourage teachers to share best practices with one another.

**Myth:** Coaches only work with teachers in need of growth.

**Reality:** Great coaches work with everyone. They meet teachers where they are in their knowledge and practice, and provide them with personalized learning at every stage of their

careers and readiness. Problems can arise, however, when coaches aren't prepared to work with strong classroom teachers and can't offer effective feedback.

**Myth:** Coaches are used as spies or compliance officers.

**Reality:** Coaches build trust by maintaining confidentiality. By definition, they are supportive, but non-evaluative, establishing a relationship based on mutual respect. When coaches are put in the position of ensuring that every teacher is pacing at the same time—a "one-size-fits-all" approach—teachers are less likely to want to work with them. "If the culture of the building is more about rule following than risk-taking, an authentic coaching program will be hard to develop" (Dewitt, 2016).

**Adapted from:** DeWitt, P. (2016, August,1). Why Don't Educators Want to Be Coached? Retrieved from [http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/finding\\_common\\_ground/2016/0/why\\_dont\\_educators\\_want\\_to\\_be\\_coached.html?cmp=soc-fb-promo-](http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/finding_common_ground/2016/0/why_dont_educators_want_to_be_coached.html?cmp=soc-fb-promo-)

DeWitt, P. (2014, November,6). 5 Reasons We Need Instructional Coaches. Retrieved from [http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/finding\\_common\\_ground/2014/11/5\\_reasons\\_we\\_need\\_instructional\\_coaches.html](http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/finding_common_ground/2014/11/5_reasons_we_need_instructional_coaches.html)

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