



Overview of Coaching in the Uintah School District

Instructional Coaching Mission

Impact student learning by improving teaching practice.

Instructional Coaching Vision

To help close the student achievement gap and accelerate learning for all students by building teacher capacity through implementation of effective instructional practices (Casey, 2008).

Student learning is at the center of all coaching actions and coaches understand that effective instruction increases student learning. Helping teachers to see the connection between effective instruction and student learning is part of the work of the instructional coach.

We follow a four part coaching cycle, which includes a preconference, an action, a reflection, and a debrief. The action is determined by the needs of the teacher and may involve any number of strategies. This cycle will be discussed in more detail later in this section.

Coaching Skills and Attributes

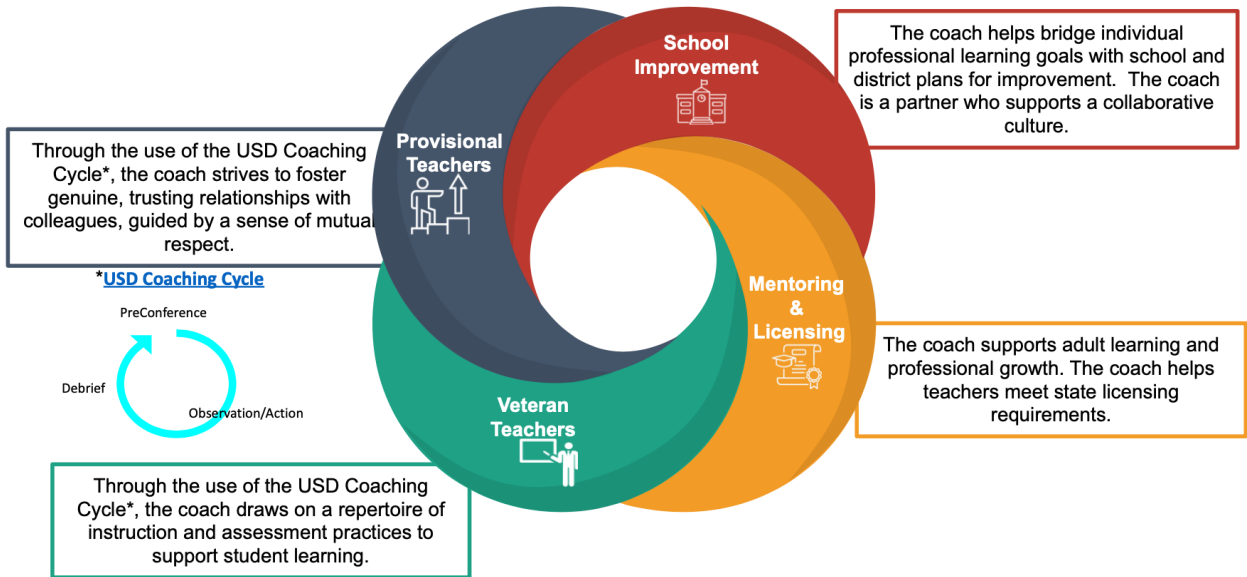
Building relationships is at the heart of any successful coaching work and is absolutely necessary if change is going to occur. Instructional coaches must be able to collaborate with teachers. As coaches in USD we take pride in the ability to form relationships and have found that when coaches have the following skills and attributes, successful coaching takes place.

Skills	Attributes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Collaborative ● Listener ● Questioner ● Reflective with action ● Knowledge of evidence based instructional strategies, with exceptional management and engagement skills ● Use of coaching cycle ● Use of technology ● Have the capacity to apply knowledge to action 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Compassion and genuine concern for others ● Positive outlook ● Empathetic ● Courage to feel uncomfortable ● Resilient ● Purposeful ● Open to feedback ● Relentless ● Growth mindset ● Looks for small wins ● Thirsty for knowledge



Coaching Framework [\(link\)](#)

In order to build and maintain an effective coaching program, USD follows a coaching framework that directs our coaching into high leverage categories. Our coaching framework recognizes the needs of each individual teacher and is tied to our district and school improvement goals. The four main areas of focus for USD instructional coaches are: 1) building and developing relationships, 2) Leading instructional practice, 3) Supporting adult learning and professional growth, and 4) Connecting our work with school and district improvement planning.



Building and Developing Relationships [\(link\)](#)

Prior to any work done within the coaching cycle, it is important that the coach build a positive relationship with the teacher. This relationship creates psychological safety for both the teacher and the coach, and allows for authentic conversations to take place. Examining data can be a daunting task and can easily overwhelm even the most veteran teacher; however, when a coach and teacher have created a safe space for this work to be done, the benefits of data analysis are enormous (Fischer, 2019).

It is important for coaches to adopt a partnership approach in building relationships with teachers (Knight, 2007). This partnership begins with the fundamental belief that we are no more important than those with whom we work, and that we should do everything we can to respect that equality. According to Jim Knight, “This approach is built around the core principles of equality, choice, voice, dialogue, reflections, praxis, and reciprocity” (pg. 24, 2007).



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Leading Instructional Practice

An instructional coach is someone whose chief professional responsibility is to bring evidence-based practices into classrooms by working with teachers and other school leaders. The instructional coaching process centers around the goals of increasing student engagement, improving student achievement, and building teacher capacity in schools.

Adult Learning and Professional Development

USD Instructional coaches believe in and respect the professionalism of teachers. Research has shown that if you partner with teachers to implement strategies in the classroom and you support implementation, teachers in a school can choose to make an “internal commitment”. As a result, they will be invested in the instructional coaching partnership to best benefit themselves and their students (Knight, 2018). Professional learning should enable authentic dialogue. Reflection is an integral part of professional learning. (Knight, Instructional coaching, pg. 47)

Connecting With District and School Improvement

The coach helps bridge individual professional learning goals with school and district plans for improvement. The coach is a partner who supports a collaborative culture.

Building an Instructional Alliance ([link](#))

Building relationships with teachers is essential to successful coaching, however, just as important is the relationship that the coach builds with the principal or administrative team. When it comes to making change school wide, an instructional coach will gain leverage when she or he works in partnership with the school leader.

School leadership teams create their school improvement plans based on the needs of their building and faculty while also taking into consideration the district wide improvement plan goals. School improvement plans have an instructional component and it is within this domain that coaches can make an impact. Working with the principal, coaches can help to create a vision for what that plan looks like in action. Coaches can use this partnership to help clearly establish a culture of learning and improvement within the school. In order to accomplish this, coaches may work with PLC teams to establish team protocols and learner-friendly team norms (Knight, 2007, pg. 32).

Coaching Assignments

Coaches are assigned to schools based on their background experience and grade level expertise.

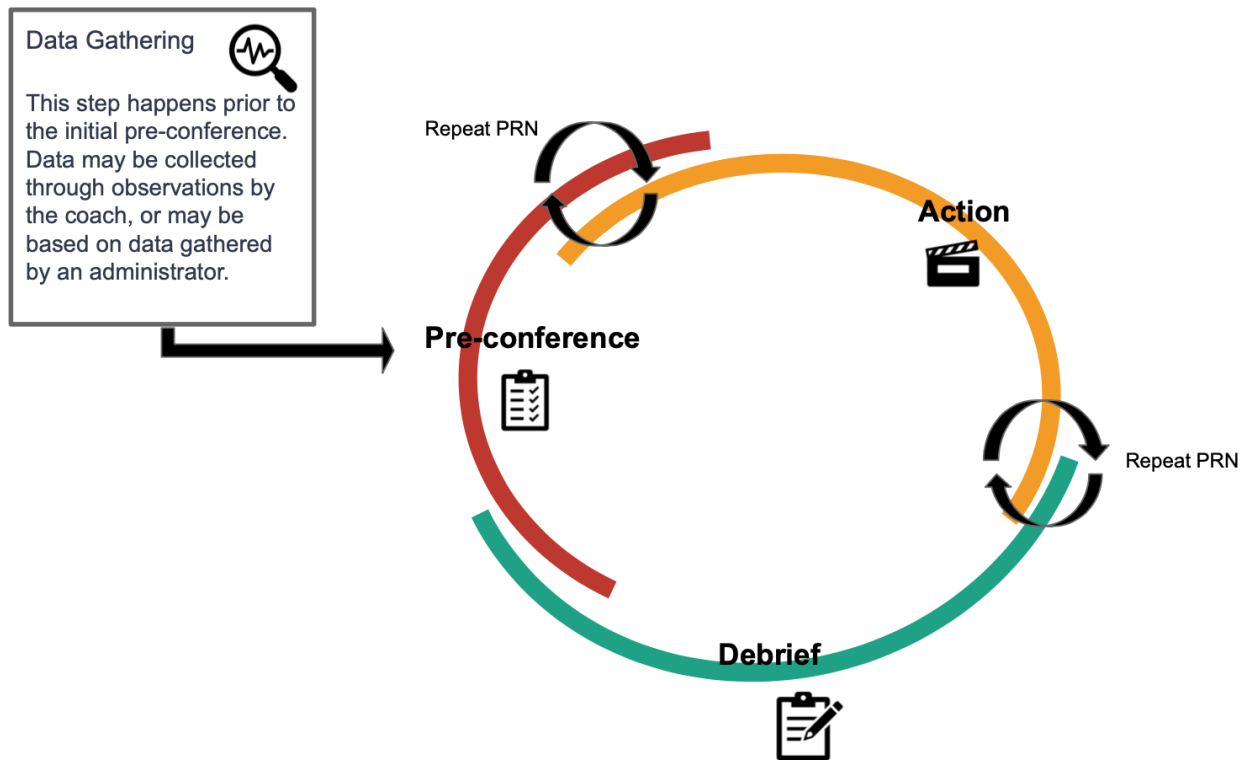
The Coaching Cycle

We follow a four step coaching cycle with fidelity. The cycle is based on research from multiple authors, but pulls heavily from the works of Jim Knight, Jill Jackson, and Randy Sprick with the group at Safe and Civil Schools. Our USD model is also supported by years of use by USD coaches. Our model is grounded in



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adult learning theory and takes into consideration that in order for any coaching program to be successful, a “partnership approach” (Knight 2007) must be used.



Prior to starting the coaching cycle with a teacher, the coach will initiate building a relationship based on the partnership principles (Knight, 2018). During the Diagnostic Data Gathering stage of the cycle, the coach will gather preliminary or diagnostic data in order to get a baseline of teacher performance. Most often this data is collected by the coach within the first few weeks of meeting the teacher and introducing the coaching program. This time period allows the teacher and coach to build a friendly relationship as well as gives the coach time to see the teacher in action. There are instances when data is provided to the coach from the principal. It is vital that the coach still view this as an opportunity to build a relationship with the teacher in order to establish a working partnership.

Parts of the Cycle

1) [Preconference](#)

Before any observation, the coach will meet with the teacher and discuss what action will be taken. This could include the type of data to be taken during instruction as well as the specific target. The teacher and the coach both leave the meeting knowing exactly when and how the data will be taken. Having a specific target area to work on allows teachers to be successful in that one area and gives them the confidence to move on to another target.



2) [Action](#)

An action can be any number of planned activities that are used to help the teacher reach a target. The most common form of action is an observation, with data collection, conducted by the coach in the teacher's classroom. Other examples of actions are a personal professional development day (PDD) with the teacher, peer observations with another teacher, or watching a video of another teacher modeling the desired target. During the observation the coach only focuses on the specific target. Taking data on facts only, not making any assumptions.

3) *Data Reflection

Reflection on data is the way the coach and teacher can collectively identify the gap between the current reality and their target. The collaborative exploration of data is vital in building the partnership approach. Clear communication and proven questioning techniques will allow for the coach and teacher to conduct a dialogue around the data. The goal is for the teacher to be part of the reflection so that they can build their own understanding of what needs to be done. 'Giving direct, specific, non-attributive feedback is a skill that every coach should develop' (Knight, 2007, pg. 125)

*This portion of the cycle can be combined or overlap with the debrief. As the coach and teacher work together they will begin to form a pattern for how the coaching cycle best works for their partnership. In the initial stages of the partnership the reflection may occur during the debrief, but just as with students, the coach will gradually release the teacher as their skills for reflection increase.

4) [Debrief/Post Conference](#)

After the observation, the coach and teacher meet to discuss and reflect on the data. Based on the data, an action plan is made. The same target can be observed or a new target can be chosen. This is a collaborative process between the coach and teacher. The day and time for the next observation will be decided.

The Importance of Observing Practice and Using Data

Observing Instruction

The practice of observing instruction allows the coach to be an objective witness to the teacher's pedagogical practices. Observing practice should be grounded in a rubric or a framework for effective teaching and be backed by high leverage, evidence based teaching strategies. A coaching observation is non-evaluative and should be driven by data that supports teacher growth so that feedback is aligned.



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Use of Data

“Effective use of data can spark curiosity in teachers and motivate them to investigate their pedagogical practices” (Whetstone Education, 2019). Data-driven coaching processes are the most efficient way to accurately track and measure growth. Bringing data into the picture allows teachers to see beyond their assumptions and coaches must become skilled at gathering data reliably (Knight, 2018). In order to get a clear picture of current reality, teachers must be able to review and reflect on data. Data can be gathered in multiple ways, including video recording, observation data, and student learning data. Methods of collecting data can be broken into qualitative and quantitative, but the most powerful use of data comes from triangulation of multiple data sources. The end goal is for teachers to get a clear, objective picture of their current reality so that they can make changes that will positively impact student learning.

Types of Data

Qualitative data

Classroom observations (specifically using scripting as a means of collection), debrief meetings, and open-ended questionnaires are the most common form of collected qualitative data. Video recordings are an effective method of qualitative data collection that can easily be shared with teachers. Using this data allows the teacher and coach to see patterns.

Quantitative data

Numerical data points can be gathered through focused informal and formal observations using a rubric. Data is collected on forms that give feedback in specific high leverage strategies. Quantitative data collected through teacher observations have enormous potential to support teacher growth.

Resources

Knight, Jim (2018). *The impact cycle: What instructional coaches should do to foster powerful improvements in teaching*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin, A Sage Company.

Knight, Jim (2015). *High-impact instruction a framework for great teaching*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Knight, Jim. (2007). *Instructional Coaching: A partnership approach to improving instruction*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Using Teacher Performance Data To Improve Teacher Performance
Libby Fischer. (2019).

<https://www.whetstoneeducation.com/blog/using-teacher-performance-data-to-improve-teacher-performance>



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