

How Coaching Can Impact Teachers, Principals, and Students (edutopia)

To date, the most thorough and comprehensive study on coaching was done in 2004 by the Annenberg Foundation for Education Reform. It reports a number of findings which offer powerful validation for coaching. First, the report concludes that effective coaching encourages collaborative, and reflective practice. Coaching allows teachers to apply their learning more deeply, frequently, and consistently than teachers working alone. Coaching supports teachers to improve their capacity to reflect and apply their learning to their work with students and also in their work with each other.

A second finding from the Annenberg report is that effective embedded professional learning promotes positive cultural change. The conditions, behaviors, and practices required by an effective coaching program can affect the culture of a school or system, thus embedding instructional change within broader efforts to improve school-based culture and conditions.

Coaching was also linked to teachers' increase in using data to inform practice. Effective coaching programs respond to particular needs suggested by data, allowing improvement efforts to target issues such as closing achievement gaps and advocating for equity. The Annenberg report found that coaching programs guided by data helped create coherence within a school by focusing on strategic areas of need that were suggested by evidence, rather than by individual and sometimes conflicting opinions.

Another key finding was that coaching promotes the implementation of learning and reciprocal accountability. Coaching is an embedded support that attempts to respond to student and teacher needs in ongoing, consistent, dedicated ways. The likelihood of using new learning and sharing responsibility rises when colleagues, guided by a coach, work together and hold each other accountable for improved teaching and learning.

Finally, the Annenberg report determined that coaching supports collective leadership across a school system. An essential feature of coaching is that it uses the relationships between coaches, principals, and teachers to create the conversation that leads to behavioral, pedagogical, and content knowledge change. Effective coaching distributes leadership and keeps the focus on teaching and learning. This focus promotes the development of leadership skills, professional learning, and support for teachers that target ways to improve student outcomes...

As the field of coaching in schools develops, it is critical that we identify and gather sets of qualitative and quantitative data that can reveal the impact of our work on student learning. We need to track the changes we see in teacher and leader practice and gather evidence that our work is resulting in improved student learning. This can be an exciting and validating effort -- it is these data that help us feel effective and that let us know objectively that we're doing good work. In order to do this, we need to make sure that the scope of our work is defined and narrow, that we're gathering data on how our clients make progress, and that we're articulating these findings.

A highly effective, comprehensive coaching program in a school or district supports coaches to systematically gather a range of evidence to illustrate the impact of coaching on teachers, administrators, and students.

<http://www.edutopia.org/blog/coaching-impact-teachers-principals-students-elena-aguilar>